



Glass Ceilings and Their Breaking in the School Institution

DENISA DENGLEROVÁ
AND MARTINA KUROWSKI

*D*ear readers, please accept our invitation to read the fourth issue of the seventy-first edition of the *Pedagogika* journal. This issue comes at a time when, for almost two years now, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a part of everyday existence across the world. Also against this backdrop, it is evident that we are living in a divided world. Many people live enclosed in their social bubbles, convinced of the rightness of their own perception of the world. Many opinions and ideas are not shaped by rational arguments; propaganda and media manipulation are given a great deal of space. We can only communicate with different currents of opinion in a very limited way.

In such a world, the school as an institution is of great importance, as it is one of the last environments where children (and thus, indirectly, their families) from different social bubbles and backgrounds, with different social and cultural capital, come together. We, the editors, see class diversity, which is a real phenomenon that schools are increasingly facing in the 21st century, as a positive opportunity for society as a whole to maintain at least a basic level of belonging, without which we will be paralysed. The ability to value and treat diversity positively is central to inclusion and inclusive education. As advocates of pro-inclusive tendencies in education across all levels, we initially wanted to focus, in this monothematic issue, on ethnicity in schools as an aspect of



diversity that can cause difficulties for schools and their pupils. However, it soon became apparent that the current reality is much more colourful, and to pick out just one difference does not provide a sufficient understanding of the whole situation. The glass ceiling, this invisible yet tangible barrier that some children may encounter in the educational process, is set in a very variable way, and includes many aspects touching on the identity of the pupils, whether it is ethnicity, gender, health, special educational needs, mother tongue, etc. that are initially mentioned. In this monothe-matic issue, we are pleased to present not only the different glass ceilings but also the possibilities of breaking through them.

In this edition, we present seven papers: four comprehensive expert studies and three shorter papers providing insights into practice.

Onivehu Adams Origima, in his contribution *Ethnic Identity, Self-esteem, and Academic Performance of Nigerian In-school Adolescents*, shows how awareness of ethnic identity and its promotion enhances the self-esteem, self-worth, and academic performance of adolescents. It suggests how teachers can develop effective psychosocial interventions to help school-age adolescents embrace their ethnic identity, which will benefit not only specific students individually, but also the entire class, and by extension, the entire school and the community in which it is embedded. The entire research study is conducted in a quantitative paradigm and involves nearly 800 Nigerian students.

Markéta Sedláková and David Košatka, in their research study *Identities in the Era of Globalization: Reflection of international experience as a tool for culturally responsive and inclusive education*, found that experiencing different socio-cultural backgrounds impacts on the construction of multiple identities and increases empathy for diversity. Student teachers who were on a long-term placement abroad later reflected this experience in their own teaching. Not only was their sensitivity to diversity when teaching students enhanced, but their teaching was also more effective, because, as teachers, they were more able to respond to students in different ways. The research is based on a qualitative research paradigm; in-depth interviews with ten students were interpreted in the context of situational analysis.

In her review article, *Harnessing Mother Tongue Diversities for Education in a Globalized Society: A literature review*, Ntite Orji Kalu discusses the use of students' mother tongue diversity in the classroom. She shows how different mother tongues can benefit both the individual and the entire culturally inclusive learning environment, which can lead to a universal education system that reduces educational inequalities and leads to economic growth and cohesion.

In their theoretical study *Inclusion of Children with Diabetes Mellitus in Czech Schools*, the authors Pavla Kudlová and Helena Skarupská try to draw attention to the growing group of children with health disadvantages. That children have diabetes may not be obvious at first sight; their educational needs are often overlooked and the children, or their



parents, are often too shy to talk openly about the problem. The authors point out that diabetes has implications for pupils' cognitive abilities and therefore for their engagement in the classroom. They agree that it is also important not to conceal these 'invisible' illnesses and to explain them sensitively in the context of the whole class. The presence of children with diabetes in the school increases the general sensitivity to otherness.

All four studies show that accepting one's own identity (no matter how different or seemingly flawed, far from the norm or ideal) in a diversified society is an essential step towards being able to open up as an individual to otherness; to accept and appreciate the differences of others. If we do not have a sufficiently explored, conscious, and accepted identity of our own, it is difficult to open up to the multitude of other identities that may threaten our own immature identity.

In the second part of this issue you can read three papers whose authors have many years of experience in developing identity in inclusive school environments. Joe Provisor writes about his experience as a high school teacher in Los Angeles schools, with high numbers of students from migrant or socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The author highlights a system of three resources that have helped to appreciate and promote student self-awareness. These are inspired by Freire's pedagogical approach, Asher's Total Physical Response (learning a foreign language through the use of the body), and circle-based pedagogies.

Květoslava Klímová, Martina Kurowski, and Hana Svobodová focus on the teaching of Czech as a second language. The number of children with a different mother tongue in Czech schools is increasing and therefore the issue of teaching Czech as a second language is gaining importance. The authors therefore present the Complex Language Analysis approach, which emphasises the strong connection between teaching a new language and lived practice.

The last contribution to analyse the educational experience is a paper by Natalia Markhovska from Mariupol State University in Ukraine. The author describes the situation of a university environment that has received a larger number of internally displaced university students from temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories who can no longer continue their studies at their home universities because of the war conflict. Mariupol University not only accepted these students, but prepared an inclusive environment for them with the maximum possible level of support (additional courses, accommodation support, psychological support, etc.).

This monothematic issue concludes with František Trapl's review of David G. Horrell's book, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, race, and whiteness in constructions of Jewish and Christian identities*, published in 2020, which provides a new perspective on the construction of the relationship between Judaism and early Christianity.

We hope that the rich diversity of this issue will help readers become aware of the barriers to learning that students across different levels of education may encounter. At



the same time, we can take comfort in knowing that there is much interesting work going on in educational research, and in concrete educational practice, to raise and break through glass ceilings together.

We wish all our readers inspiring reading and thinking about the papers!

Denisa Denglerová

Department of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, Czech Republic; email: denglerova@utb.cz

Martina Kurowski

Department of Social Education, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic; email: kurowski@ped.muni.cz