

Od Redakcji

Oddawany Państwu do rąk numer „Problemów Wczesnej Edukacji” poświęcony jest tematyce tyleż popularnej obecnie, co niejednoznacznej i wzbudzającej liczne kontrowersje i emocje.

Kwestie oceniania, diagnozy i ewaluacji w systemie szkolnym to jedne z kluczowych zagadnień pedagogicznych i praktycznych. Zwłaszcza Polska, od kilku lat wchodząca, z różnymi perturbacjami, w system egzaminów zewnętrznych, akredytacji, raportów i coraz bardziej rozległych obszarów diagnoz, potrzebuje refleksji w tym zakresie. Stąd też wydawało się zasadne poświęcenie kolejnego numeru tej problematyce.

Autorami artykułów są specjaliści z wielu subdyscyplin pedagogicznych, związani również na różne sposoby z systemem edukacji. Kontekst polski poszerzony został o głosy z krajów, w których badania i praktyki z tym związane, były podejmowane w szerszym zakresie nieco wcześniej niż w Polsce. Warto więc przyjrzeć się ich doświadczeniom.

Procedury oceniania i ewaluacyjne łączą się z zagadnieniami efektywności i jakości działania szkoły. Wbrew powszechnym opiniom są głęboko uwikłane w ideologie edukacyjne i stanowią wyraz określonej teorii kształcenia. Myślenie o nich jako o obiektywnych jest zatem niczym nieuzasadnione. Szeroko rozumiane ocenianie to element władzy, np. decydentów na nauczycielami, nauczycieli nad uczniami, ale bardziej ogólnie: władzy symbolicznej związanej z myśleniem o normie i standardzie. W zależności od tego, co oceniamy i jak oceniamy, nasze działania stają się uprawomocnieniem władzy oraz wiedzy i kompetencji uznanych za pożądane. Bezpośrednio przekłada się to na kreację sylwetki obywatela i procedury selekcji.

Ocenianie, diagnoza i ewaluacja odgrywają znaczącą rolę w życiu publicznym i jednostkowym, aktywizując działania terapeutyczne, udoskonalając edukację, ale prowadząc też do określonych kosztów społecznych. Refleksja nad tymi procesami może przyczynić się do ich zmniejszania.

Editorial

This issue of "*Problems in early education*" is devoted to a topic which is as popular today, as much as it is ambiguous and controversial, with the consequence that it arouses many emotions.

The question of assessment, diagnosis and evaluation in the school system are among some of the key practical and pedagogical issues at the present time. Poland in particular needs to reflect upon this area, having recently experienced some problems in relation to external examinations, accreditation and reports, as well as the more extensive area of diagnosis. Therefore, it seems reasonable to devote another number of "*Problems in early education*" to these issues.

The authors of the articles are specialists in a number of pedagogical sub-disciplines, related in various ways to the education system. The Polish context has been extended by including voices from countries where relevant research and practices have been undertaken

and implemented slightly earlier, and in a more wide ranging way than in Poland. So that their experience is worth considering.

Assessment and evaluation procedures are linked to issues of efficiency and quality in school performance. Contrary to widespread opinion, they are deeply involved in educational ideology and constitute an expression of a particular theory of education. Regarding them as objective is, therefore, unreasonable. Broadly perceived assessment is, for example, an element of power of decision-makers over teachers, teachers over pupils, but more generally: a symbol of power associated with both the thinking about and the standard and quality of education. Depending on what and how things are assessed, our actions become a validation of power, knowledge and competencies, as well as being identified as desirable. This directly translates into the creation of a national profile and a selection procedure.

Assessment, diagnosis and evaluation play a significant role in public and individual life; they activate therapeutic actions, improve education, but at what social cost? Reflection on these processes can only contribute to the decrease of any adverse effects.

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Streszczenia / Abstracts

Paul Black

Formative Assessment in Pedagogy: Principles and Practices

The interest in, and implementation of, formative assessment practices has raised new questions, both of principle and of practice. This paper starts by considering the place of formative assessment in a broader theory of pedagogy, illustrating the argument by a detailed look at formative interactions within classroom dialogue. It goes on to explore other formative practices in turn, arguing that what they have in common is the potential to contribute powerfully to achieving the aim of helping pupils to direct and manage their own learning, and to enrich their own learning and the learning of others through collaboration with one another. However, adoption of these practices raises difficult challenges for both teachers and their pupils, and a clear view of the principles is essential if superficial adoption is to be avoided.

Harry Torrance, John Pryor

The social construction of success and failure in classroom assessment in England

The article addresses the question of how social class, still a major determinant of educational achievement in England, is manifested and realised in action at classroom level. The chapter draws on observation and interview data which were gathered in the course of two ESRC-sponsored research projects which the authors conducted in the late 1990s in England; projects designed to investigate how National Curriculum and Testing policy was being interpreted by teachers and how it was impacting on classroom practice. The research focussed on infant and primary schools (KS1 and KS2, ages 5-7 and 8-11) and set out to identify and describe how assessment is practised in these early years of schooling and how particular assessment 'events' or 'incidents' are accomplished. It also explores to what extent teachers and students share a common understanding of the nature and purpose of such events. Analyses is also made of how success and failure are constructed and perceived in the course of such events.

Henryk Mizerek

Why do we need evaluation at school?

The main purpose of the paper is to highlight the value of knowledge gathered by means of evaluation from the perspective of social studies. The article will look at forms of formative evaluation – evaluation through clarification, interactive evaluation and evaluation through monitoring. The paper will concentrate upon the practical value of knowledge gathered during evaluation research in schools, with the author attempting to find answers as to what evaluation means; the practical value of knowledge acquired by evaluation research; how a major discrepancy between the field of deep reflection on the essence and purposes of evaluation, and the field of practical action might be explained, and the reasons and consequences of the prevalence of bureaucratic evaluation. The article claims that the gap between reflection and pedagogical action, existing mainly in Poland, might be the main reason for the failure of evaluation research, arising from differences in how it is commonly understood and the definition given in the relative literature; evaluation frequently being identified with assessment.

Anna Strzelecka-Ristow

An Approach to Quality- The difficult Art of Evaluation

The following article deals with different aspects and problems the polish educational system experienced on its „way to professional quality”, especially during the last decade of the 20th century. The author’s data mostly refer to the Teacher Training College of Szczytno, situated in the Wojewodship of Warmia and Mazury. Her main issue is to reveal, how new concepts and technical terms like *quality in education*, *self-evaluation*, *internal evaluation*, *accreditation* a.s.o as instruments of investigation and essential means for improvements were gradually adapted and integrated into the system of polish teacher education , and so, once having been looked upon suspiciously as intruders, now are among the unquestioned main pillars to guarantee and hold up quality on the young polish teacher’s way to professional proficiency.

John Pryor

Developing thinking about Formative Assessment

This paper summarizes the research of the author into formative assessment. After an introduction, the second part introduces the idea of formative assessment and its historical context. Basic research investigating formative assessment in early years classrooms is then summarized and the conceptual framework of convergent and divergent introduced. The fourth part describes action research with primary school teachers to develop their practice using these concepts and an analytic framework of formative assessment processes. It also explains a more synthetic approach developed by the teacher researchers to accomplish formative assessment in practice. The fifth section shows how these ideas have been taken forward through research into formative assessment at university. Some of the outcomes of this research are then related speculatively to practice with younger children and readers are asked to appraise their relevance for a Polish (early years) setting. In particular the notion of learner identity is invoked as a way of making sense of formative assessment as a means of bridging the individual and social worlds of contemporary schooling and aspiration.

Sławomir Krzychała, Beata Zamorska

Teachers as researchers in the social world of the school - an introduction to documentary evaluation

This article concerns a documentary evaluation tool which will enable teachers to answer the question: ‘What is really happening in our school?’. Seemingly similar problems in schools turn out to be different, with an understanding of what they consist of and where they come from, requiring comprehension of their complexity and the diversity of conditioning and experience of those who participate in school life. The documentary evaluation tool proposed requires two things from the teachers who run it: an awareness of their own personal involvement and views, and simultaneously, the ability to control them. In relation to this, using the cascade model of documentary evaluation, the authors, together with the teacher-researchers,

went through the following stages: collecting materials that refer to the problem from various experiences and perspectives, interpretation of the gathered materials and analysis of the methods used by the team itself. Emphasis was placed on selecting a team of teacher-researchers who would create partnerships and support each other as communities of innovators.

Grażyna Szyling

Descriptive marks - Evaluation (im)possible ?

This paper explores the place of descriptive marks in early education, in relation to both theory and practice, and especially its meaning and potential for functioning within the Polish education system. The underlying assumption is that ideas relating to this area are within a paradigm for educational development derived from progressivism as opposed to more traditional models of schooling. In respect of this, analyses of different contexts were carried out to explore which factors had an impact upon the status of descriptive marks in schools. The conclusion based on the results of the analyses is that the concept of descriptive marks from a progressivist perspective is much weaker than that which prevails within the existing educational realities and their attendant limitations. In spite of this, an appropriate use of descriptive results is still possible in early education, while the fact that the concept of “formative evaluation” is becoming more and more popular in Poland has created an opportunity for redefining and giving new meaning to the aims of school marks.

Iwona Kopaczyńska

Early school assessment from behaviourism to constructionism

Early school assessment is one of the components of educational process, which are mutually

connected and form a coherent whole, starting from theoretical and ideological arrangements that construct the way of thinking about education and its effects, and finishing with practical methods of everyday activities of the teacher and pupil in learning situations and knowledge verification.

The author presents two contrastive theoretical perspectives: behaviourism and constructionism showing the object of assessment (i.e. what is assessed), procedure (i.e. how assessment is carried out and how it is expressed), and assessment functions in the light of the two perspectives. When analysing the author applies the theory of educational codes by B. Bernstein. This theory reveals the relations between types of education offered to pupils and the realization of assessment, as well as its importance for the child.

Marzenna Nowicka

Descriptive assessment – professional diagnosis and support for pupils’ abilities or an area of sterile bureaucracy?

The descriptive assessment of pupils in grades 1-3 is one of the major components of the reformed Polish school system. The assessment should fully evaluate the learning abilities of the child, support their development and be an important motivational factor. Analysis of examples of school certificates containing descriptive assessment leads the author to the conclusion that this assessment does not accomplish the above. The main insufficiencies of descriptive assessment in the context of child development are: unequal emphasis upon particular areas of child development, the underlining of only partial abilities; imprecise descriptions; the inability to describe the dynamics of skills development and its directions; the pressure to make the child comply with school rules, as well as neglect of the curious and creative attitude of pupils. All the above mentioned insufficiencies significantly diminish the value of the assessment, which does not in the end support the pupil in their development, but becomes rather a mass of useless paperwork.

Agnieszka Nowak-Łojewska

Externals of descriptive assessment – reflections on the margin of school practice

The article discusses descriptive assessment used in early primary education. It comprises of three parts - theoretical, research and project. Part one analyses the literature in order to present the concept of descriptive assessment. Part two presents the results of research done on the grounds of quality analysis of descriptive assessments made by primary teachers in years 1-3. The final part aims at showing directions of changes and tendencies in modifying the methods of the child's assessment.

Kinga Bornowska, Jarosław Jendza, Piotr Zamojski

Ambiguity of the university school selections - research rapport. (On the example of the teachers education quality)

The authors consider school selection as a phenomenon of ambivalent nature since it has got two equally important yet opposite aspects, one of which is the aspect that is called *functional*. In this sense, school selection is of vital importance in contemporary, highly complex, post-industrial societies in which playing social and professional roles (i.e. teachers) demands certain content-related competences. The other aspect of the phenomenon is called *critical*. The authors believe – after the New Sociology of Education – that school selection processes can be regarded as a main mechanism of reproducing social structure through cultural reproduction. The article is a report from a research project on school selection that takes place in the Institute of Education, University of Gdańsk. In this research the authors paid special attention to the functional aspect of the phenomenon since it occurs that the percentage of students selection recorded from 2000 to 2005 is statistically insignificant. Furthermore, students’ awareness of the functional aspect of school selection is limited to ideological declaration. The outcome of the research is interpreted from the perspective of the two aspects of the phenomenon that were presented at the beginning of the article.

Amadeusz Krause

Diagnosis in special education: a necessity with dangerous consequences

Diagnosis in special education is difficult and its consequences are not always intentional. Diagnosis is conducted in order to support the child and his/her family in coping with disability, and to begin the process of rehabilitation. A process of branding and stigmatization, or a change in the life of a child which puts him/her in a situation of discomfort and suffering, may be an unintentional result of such a diagnosis. The art of good diagnosis, therefore, also calls for appropriate post diagnostic actions to maximize support on the one hand and reduce branding on the other.

Tom Balchin

Balancing Identifications: Encouraging Parental Feedback and Recanting Registers of the Gifted

This paper focuses firstly on the need to rescind the requirement for schools to produce statistics about numbers of gifted learners for a National Register in the UK. It explains how a Register of this nature is unsuitable for other countries to adopt: in the UK it is influenced by a near-total dependence upon unreliable in-school teacher nominations for gifted programmes and a general confusion with the way the English conception of gifted and talented should be implemented. In an attempt to balance up current identification priorities, the importance of parental involvement, feedback and co-advocacy with schools for gifted education is discussed. This paper argues that resources should be reallocated to pay for the time required for G&T co-ordinators or specialists to collate structured parental feedback concerning their child's current strengths or abilities.

Riitta Korhonen

Testing and evaluating children who need special support. Views about early childhood intervention

The article reviews various aspects of evaluation and testing of children in their early years, based upon theories and research concerning language related problems and testing for autism in young children. Within the article, the author outlines a number of tests and evaluation techniques available to those working with young children and concedes that evaluation is necessary for learning. In relation to this the author also pinpoints the dangers of evaluation and testing, as having possible harmful effects upon the child. In relation to this, the author proposes that it is important for teachers and experts to be aware of this situation, suggesting that children who have developmental problems or learning difficulties should undergo thorough and proper evaluation, so that early intervention can start as soon as possible. In addition to this, the author suggests that it is also necessary for cooperation to exist between parents, teachers and experts.

Lauritz Brännström, Ingrid Häggström

How to refine measurements of phonemic awareness in preschool children

The aim of the study was to further refine and develop a test instrument for mapping phonemic awareness in preschool children. The test consisted of three subtests, each measuring different aspects of phonemic awareness. The test and its details were similar to an earlier, validated version of the test as regards content, while the form of the test and its psychometric standards were improved. In order to evaluate the test's ability to measure the changes in phonemic awareness after one preschool year of systematic exposure to training of phonemic awareness, a premeasurement was made before the training programme and a post measurement thirtytwo weeks later when the program was finished. The results showed the strong, significant positive effects of the training program. The psychometric characteristics of the test and its subtests also revealed that the subtests reflect both similar and complementary aspects of phonemic awareness that can be reliably measured and which together form a robust and reliable test of phonemic awareness. The results revealed no differences in means and dispersions between groups of boys and girls on any of the subtests or on total scores, thereby supporting the view that these well structured training tasks affected phonemic awareness in a similar way over time. The teachers' professional role and attitudes to the systematic training programme also

affected both the children's motivation for the tasks as well as their amusement. Another conclusion was that the teacher's job can be seen as both arduous and very rewarding. Finally, a further validating study is announced which will show that phonemic awareness among preschool children, as measured by the present test, is a necessary prerequisite for the decoding of words in written text when reading.

Dorota Bronk

Outsiders at the school desk? Developmental dyslexia - diagnosis and reality.

Developmental dyslexia is as old as the ability of writing itself. No doubt, this very specific difficulty in learning is not new. But recently it is so common (especially in school learning) that it has become a real "school plague". True, for most teachers, parents and pupils this problem is quite new. However, the early research on difficulties in reading and writing started at the end of the 19th century. The content of this article is the following: (1) Introduction to developmental dyslexia - overview: definition, terminology, types, forms, symptoms; (2) Diagnosing specific difficulties in learning - diagnosis process, different aspects, interbranch methods; (3) Overcoming most common educational weaknesses, through: changing general attitude to developmental dyslexia, identifying people with specific difficulties in learning, looking for ways of living and dealing with dyslexia, designing interbranch methods and tools of diagnosing, implementing adequate programmes in teachers' training, and developing perspectives for people with dyslexia in the national educational system.

Maria Groenwald

On the Benefits Deriving from Educational Diagnosis

The paper addresses the issue of the benefits arising from educational diagnosis, to be obtained – presumably – by students, parents and education authorities. The attaining of information supporting the process of education and upbringing has been shown as examples of such benefits. These, however, having been interpreted in terms of either an educational success or a failure, can be the source of negative consequences for the people involved. At the institutional level, the attainment of data confirming the usability of education, and some consequences of treating usability as the greatest value has been paid attention to. It has been presented that if education serves the student's sake only seemingly, then the diagnosis conducted within its frame turns only seeming and so does the benefit it leads to.

Iwona Majcher

Assessment of practical skills in primary school pupils as exemplified by Biology. An outline of the problem

The measurement of practical skills, so common in vocational schools, is a highly neglected area of pupil performance assessment in other types of schools. This study shows the general principles underlying the construction and evaluation of problems used to assess biological practical skills in primary schools. In addition to this, there are sample tests with their evaluation, which shows an absence of any substantive reasons for teachers' refraining from assessing the performance of pupils in this field.

Krystyna Liszka

Assessment of pupils in early education as an area of educational systems confrontation, or – when the sun was bald

The text is an attempt at presenting basic contradictions in systems of traditional and alternative education, manifesting themselves when a selected element of those systems is analyzed, namely the assessment of pupils in early school education. Referring to the conception of Sośnicki, the reasons were shown for numerous failures and misunderstandings connected with the introduction of the so-called

'system alien' solutions into educational practice, concerning the broadly understood descriptive assessment. The results of selected empirical investigations into the question of the

assessment of 1-3 grade pupils were referred to, which were conducted under the banner of an educational system reform at the time of the political system transformation.