



Dear IEJEE readers,

One of the contemporary educational issues in our time is to highlight the different aspects of *assessment for learning, assessment of learning, high-stakes assessments*, and the role of the *different rating and assessment strategies* that the teachers use. Practicing teachers and educational administrators need research based knowledge about the relationship between these educational activities and the students' learning outcomes. In the first article Dr. Gallant presents interesting results from a large-scale research in US context. Her conclusion is that developmentally appropriate curriculum and curriculum-embedded performance assessment have positive impact on primary students' academic achievement.

In the second article Dr. Berridge and Dr. Thomas examined the 79 fiction selections of a reading list for K-2 grades which was sponsored by the educational authorities of the State of Indiana, USA. The result of their critical study of Indiana Reading List is informative and hopefully will have impact on the state's future actions. The good news for Indiana is that "...gender bias was minimal and no presence of racial bias" was observed. The challenging issue however is that "the sponsored reading list is out of date, need to contain more award winning selections." Furthermore Indiana's sponsored reading list "fails to represent a balance of women authors and selections containing female protagonists." The article is both critical and constructive in the sense that Dr. Berridge and Dr. Thomas on the one hand pinpoint the problematic sides of the reading list and on the other hand they show the way how the dysfunctional aspects of a such policy can be eliminated.

In 2011, IEJEE devoted a special issue on reading comprehension edited by Dr. Karen M. Zabrocky, Georgia State University, USA. We received an overwhelming feedback on that special issue. In this number, Dr. Mokhtari and Dr. Niederhauser present a fascinating paper on the role of vocabulary knowledge and syntactic awareness on reading comprehension. The authors present the findings in reading research over the last seven decades concerning the important contribution that vocabulary knowledge has to the students' reading comprehension. At the same time, they draw our attention on the importance of syntactic awareness for reading comprehension. Based on their own research on thirty-two 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, they found that "...when both vocabulary and syntax were used as predictors, about 68% of the variance in reading comprehension could be predicted." In their discussions of the literature and own findings they add the following "These findings indicate that reading requires fundamental knowledge of the meaning of words and fundamental knowledge of the internal structure of sentences." It will not be a surprise for me if the readers consider this article as one of the best contributions to the field of reading comprehension.

The fourth article in this issue is about a country which came into focus of educationists and educational policy makers when PISA (Program for International Student Assessment; an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy) results were released for about a decade ago. We are talking about Finland, a Nordic country with 5.5 million inhabitants. Since the year of 2000, the Finnish school system became a hot topic. In their informative article Dr. Uusiautti, Dr. Paksuniemi and Dr. Määttä give the reader a historical overview of the development of the Finnish elementary education,

changing perceptions on child rearing, parents-school relationship and the teachers and teacher education. As a part of their discussion in the paper they underline this "In Finland, the science of education as a key component of teacher education was and is a sustained and consistent tradition". I think there is an important lesson to be taken from this point when teacher education is on the agenda in many countries.

Multicultural education in a broad sense is an important contemporary topic in an increasing number of countries. Recently I arranged a seminar on 'Diversity and Citizenship Education in Global Times' at the University of Oslo, Department of Education. It was a great pleasure for me to meet Dr. Cherry Banks and Dr. James Banks, who gave a wonderful speech about the topic. I had the same feelings when I read Dr. Iwai's article. In several circles the concept of Multicultural education is not understood or misunderstood. In her well written article she draws on important perspectives originated from wellknown researchers Gay, Banks & Banks and Nieto, regarding multicultural education which at a philosophical level is "an idea or concept, an educational reform movement". Multicultural education is at the same time "a process" which at an operational level is an educational strategy "...to augment diverse students' academic achievements and assist other students in becoming meaningful members of the global society". Multicultural education "includes the assumption of providing all students with equal opportunities to learn in school". She presents important findings in related research and her own research, particularly based on Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory, developed and/or revised by several prominent researchers, and findings with regard to teacher candidates' cultural and diversity awareness. In her discussion of the results of three research questions, she has an crucial message: It's important and possible to achieve a better multicultural awareness and attitude toward cultural diversity and multicultural education in teacher candidates and practicing teachers.

The sixth article is an experimental study in which gifted education teacher Zousel, Dr. Rule and Dr. Logan compare concept acquisition and enjoyment of learning about perfectionism under two conditions: a) bibliotherapy and b) analysis and construction of cartoons. I have to admit that this article is one of the untraditional and at the same time one of the creative articles I have ever read. Thanks to the authors and the reviewers for giving me the opportunity to be confronted with a such challenging, interesting, innovative and well written article on an important topic. I consciously decided not to make any more comments on the article, than telling the readers about the thoughts that I just got in my mind: Cartoons are something to be taken seriously. The creative cartoonist and gifted teacher Miranda Zousel and professors Rule and Lohan have more to tell about the cartoons in their article.

The last paper in this number of IEJEE is about a pilot study on the beneficial impacts of physical activities on children's academic performance outcomes. Since the year of 1992, I spent more than three years as visiting scholar at Claremont Graduate University, California USA. During my stay, I got the opportunity to visit several schools in different states in the country. One of the things that stuck me was that many schools did not have Physical Education as a subject at the school. I was disappointed. Different countries have different educational systems and devote different emphasis on PE education. In Norway the country where I live, the basic school students (6 to 16 years of age) have compulsory 706 hours PE during their 10 years of schooling. In addition to that it's mandatory that 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students are entitled to regular physical activity in addition to the hours allocated to PE each week. The main objective of this physical activity policy is to facilitate a more varied and active day of school for students. In the upper secondary schools (16 to 19 years of age) the students, regardless program, have about 90 minutes mandatory PE as a part of their education. All the

students get grades in PE starting from the year of 13. With this background I found the well written article by Dr. Erwin, Dr. Fedewa and Dr. Ahn very informative and theoretically and empirically well presented.

I wish to express my gratitudes to all authors for their scientific contributions. I also want to thank to our reviewers. Last but not least, I want to say thanks to Dr. Turan Temur and Dr. Gökhan Özsoy for all the academic advising, professional coordination, and the tireless technical contribution they have done for the publication of this issue of IEJEE.

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Editor in Chief