

Preface

The growing concern over environmental challenges is mirrored in the fact that this thematic issue of *jATES* 2020/3, is the second thematic issue of the journal this year publishing articles on environmental education. It is a great pleasure to me to launch the issue which provides an insight into the thriving world of environmental educational research. The increase of the activity of educational researchers in the field of environmental education gives us the hope, that future generation will be appropriately prepared for the challenges they will face regarding the sustainability of our civilization. This issue presents altogether nine articles: three articles on general issues of environmental education, three studies on subject-related issues and three thematic studies on the theme of education concerning light pollution.

The first article of the issue by Christiana Glettler and Franz Rauch from Austria deals with a fundamental aspect for any attempt of environmental education namely with nature-human connectedness. The article convincingly proves that spending time outdoors in nature is not just healthy and relaxing but could positively contribute towards a more sustainable future by developing several competences, which are considered vital for sustainability education.

In the second article Viktória Gósi Kövecses and her colleagues give an overview of the environmental attitudes of the freshmen of a University. Their results are hopeful not just because the overall environmental attitudes of the students are positive but especially because teacher students are aware of the fact that to address environmental attitudes and habits of their pupils will be a significant part of their jobs and are ready to take on this challenge.

Anna Krakker presents a longitudinal study about the effect of using an environmental education package among primary school children in the third article of the issue. The study demonstrates that the long term effectiveness of environmental education methods could be evaluated and so the evidence based development of the environmental education practice is an available opportunity for every stakeholder involved in the development of environmental education.

The first subject related article of the issue is Sándor Csonka's article on the relationship of Physical Education and the outdoor activities of students with special attention to the possibility of free exploration in nature. The lesson from the analysed data is that although free exploration in nature is an effective way to build connection with nature and have a positive effect on student health also, its occurrence in curricula and everyday pedagogical practice is diminishing therefore every effort to provide children with opportunities for free exploration in nature has a particular importance.

Éva Karl and György Molnár describe the accentuated role and possibilities of the digital culture subject in the process of education for sustainability and it provides concrete tasks by age groups along with detailed methodological guidance in the fifth article of the issue. The article provides an excellent example of how a balance between the technical development and the goals of environmental education is achievable in the everyday practice of a school.

The last article among the subject related studies is the Erika Homoki's article on the Comparative analysis of the methods of teaching geography in different types of schools- The results highlighted the importance of teachers' personality regarding the effectiveness of teaching as not the type of the school, but the personality of the teacher was found as the most determining in knowledge transfer and student activity during geography classes.

The closing three articles of the current issue form a thematic block on the theme of educational opportunities about light pollution.

Mika János and his colleagues' article presents a questionnaire survey conducted about public awareness on light pollution in four villages. The results points out that public awareness has a very complex background, and therefore any environmental protection initiatives like Dark Sky Parks needs a well planed public awareness strategy in order to have a effect on people's awareness. The second article on the theme of light pollution by Éva Fodor gives an overview on possible ways of introducing light pollution through nature trails as a part of the efforts aiming at to raise public awareness on the issue. Finally Anna Apró's article presents an analysis of curricula, and notes that the topic of light pollution is poorly represented in educational regulative documents, and therefore do not support effectively the introduction of the topic into the public education system.

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Attila Varga, editor of this issue