



Foreword

We are pleased to announce the publication of our latest issue. While our journal traditionally features studies in Hungarian, English, and German, this special issue is composed entirely of English-language papers. This shift reflects the international collaboration that shaped the issue, with many contributions coming from authors based in the United States.

The cross-cultural exchange represented here offers a unique opportunity to explore current topics in teacher education as examined by researchers in both Hungary and the USA. Through these articles, readers will gain insight into shared challenges, innovative practices, and the diverse ways educators apply research to improve teaching and learning. This issue highlights the connections that unite us as teacher educators – and the valuable lessons we can learn from one another.

The papers in this issue, while unified by their focus on teacher education, approach the topic from diverse perspectives. A significant number of studies delve into the field of literacy education. It is widely accepted that the internalization of a literary work is a collaborative process between author and reader. As readers' linguistic competence grows, they gain new experiences, shed biases, and develop morally, socially, and personally.

The transformative role of literature in teaching and learning is explored in Lindsay Hollingsworth and Douglas Adams's study, *Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach ELA & SS through a Thematic Book Club Project*. The authors present innovative strategies that help future educators design interdisciplinary lessons. Their approach offers preservice teachers meaningful engagement with middle-grade novels while building skills in teaching reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.

A similarly creative approach is featured in the study by Ágnes Bethlenfalvyné Streitmann and Katalin Palkóné Tabi, *Kamishibai as a Medium for Course Innovation and Real-World Outcomes*. This paper showcases the use of Kamishibai – a traditional Japanese paper theater – in a university course. Kamishibai transforms storytelling into a visual and performative experience using illustrated cards within a wooden frame. Its engaging format makes it especially effective for early childhood language acquisition.

Reading remains a lifelong gateway to diverse texts, including scientific literature, which often presents challenges due to its specialized vocabulary and style. Lindsay Hollingsworth's article, *The Craft of Preparing Pre-Service Teachers of Reading in a Science-based Landscape*, addresses this issue by offering teachers strategies to make science texts more accessible and engag-

ing. Her work equips future educators with tools to help students navigate complex informational texts.

Finally, Tamás Lózsi's study, *Rhetorical Underlies of the Development of Reading Comprehension*, responds to long-standing concerns about declining reading enjoyment and proficiency among younger generations. His research highlights how rhetorical techniques can be leveraged to strengthen reading comprehension and foster deeper engagement with texts.

Equally vital is preparing future teachers to meet the challenges of inclusive education – an issue that transcends national boundaries and creates a shared platform for professionals committed to promoting social equity in schools. Together, the presented studies underscore the multifaceted nature of inclusive education. From disability support and multilingual instruction to cultural preservation and social justice, they offer valuable insights into how teacher education can foster equity in diverse learning environments.

Erin Anderson's article, *Building Inclusive Educational Competencies*, examines how inclusive practices for children with diverse disabilities are implemented in rural schools across the United States. With a focus on equity, the study explores how an undergraduate course for preservice teachers introduces inclusive teaching methods, equipping future educators to create equitable learning environments that meet the varied needs of their students.

Expanding the conversation to intercultural understanding, Maya Lo Bello's paper, *Building Blocks to Social Justice: Using Patchwork and Literature to Develop Intercultural Knowledge*, demonstrates how literature and the arts can be powerful tools for fostering empathy and promoting social justice. Her approach encourages learners in her course to engage with diverse cultural narratives, cultivating the skills needed to support inclusive classrooms.

In a similar vein, Edina Haslauer's article, *The First Step: Preparing Rural Preservice Teachers to Support Multilingual Learners*, advocates for early and intentional preparation of educators to teach in multilingual environments. Her work emphasizes the importance of addressing the achievement gap faced by language-minority students, particularly in rural settings, and highlights strategies to empower teachers to support linguistic diversity.

Broadening the scope to cultural preservation, Milan Sztepanov's study, *Child Participants in Serbian Folk Tradition – Folk Customs in the Service of Socialization and Community Education*, introduces readers to a unique aspect of Hungarian history. Given Hungary's 13 recognized minority groups, including the Serbian community, the paper underscores the importance of maintaining cultural identity amid assimilation. Sztepanov highlights traditional Serbian folk costumes as a vivid expression of cultural continuity and explores how schools can foster identity development by preserving customs and language.

While equity and inclusion are foundational to creating fair and responsive learning environments, another equally critical dimension of teacher education is students' emotional well-being. Supporting mental health in schools is not only a pedagogical concern – it is a shared responsibility among educators, students, and families. The growing prevalence of mental health challenges among children and adults underscores the urgency of this topic in educational research and practice.

In their article, *Future Skills in Education: Psychologists' Views on the Skills of the Future from the Perspective of Individual Well-being*, Miklós Lehmann and his colleagues explore how education can equip students with the skills needed to lead balanced and fulfilling lives. The study emphasizes the teacher's role in fostering these competencies and integrating mental health awareness into everyday classroom practices.

Magdolna Szabadi's article, *A Study about the Effects of Music Therapy*, investigates the therapeutic potential of music in supporting emotional and cognitive development. Through empirical research, she demonstrates how music therapy can reduce stress and anxiety, aid emotional processing, and improve mood by influencing neurotransmitters such as endorphins and serotonin.

Rita Zsófia Biró's paper, *Diagnostic Processes for the 0–4 Age Group in the System of Pedagogical Services*, shifts the focus to early childhood education. Drawing on decades of experience, Biró presents diagnostic procedures used in early childhood education. Her insights offer valuable points of comparison with similar systems in other countries and highlight the importance of early intervention in promoting lifelong well-being.

These studies collectively emphasize that emotional well-being is not peripheral to education – it is central. By equipping teachers with tools to support mental health, we not only enhance student outcomes but also foster more compassionate, resilient learning communities.

No education journal would be complete without addressing the role of technology in teaching and learning. In their article, *Supporting In-service Teachers in Selecting Digital Learning Materials Based on Didactic Criteria: Results of an Exploratory Study*, Nikolett Sovák-Turzó and András Lénárd present findings from a study that examines how teachers evaluate digital learning materials using pedagogical criteria.

What makes their research particularly compelling is its didactic approach to reviewing digital resources available in Hungary. This topic is especially relevant in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of digital materials across educational systems. While this shift brought new opportunities for innovation, it also introduced challenges related to quality, accessibility, and instructional coherence. The authors argue that it is now essential to systematically review, evaluate, and improve these resources to ensure they support meaningful learning.

The Workshop section of our current issue features Judit Kovács, who presents a dynamic project from the Magda Szabó Bilingual Secondary School. In this initiative, students and teachers explore the English language through an immersive “Viking Age” project. Combining historical inquiry with language learning, the project offers a vivid, interactive experience that brings the curriculum to life.

This engaging and imaginative approach exemplifies how thematic, project-based learning can foster deeper student involvement and cross-disciplinary connections. We warmly recommend this practice to educators, confident that it can be adapted – either in part or in full – to a variety of school contexts.

By showcasing innovative classroom practices, this issue reinforces the importance of creativity, collaboration, and experiential learning in teacher education.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our authors for their dedicated efforts and valuable contributions. Their work enriches the field and offers educators at all levels meaningful insights.

We also thank our readers and hope this special issue provides both inspiration and practical guidance in your educational endeavors.

This cross-continental collaboration – bridging research and practice across borders – demonstrates the power of shared inquiry. It is through such exchanges that we deepen our understanding, address common challenges, and move toward more inclusive and effective education systems.

We wish you a rewarding and thought-provoking reading experience.

Edina Haslauer and Agnes Klein
the editors