

Dear Readers and Writers!

This is the fifth number of *Journal of Baltic Science Education* and it marks the beginning of the third year of its publication. We have been planning to publish two numbers this year, as we have always been doing before. The editorial board is expecting the journal to become increasingly interesting, multidimensional and helpful to all of its readers: researchers, students, teachers, and graduate students.

A two-year experience has proved relevance of the journal. 27 scientific works have been published. In addition, it not only offers scientists from Baltic States the possibility to present their researches and ideas but also helps to make contacts with researchers in other countries. The journal is open from this point of view, and we expect a lively interest from the scientific community. It is worth mentioning here that the journal has been included in the EBSCO database and is now available to all of its readers. Similarly, it has been included in the special list of quotable international publications by Latvian Science Academy which has certified to its scientific significance.

The editorial board is convinced that the policy which encouraged inviting foreign authors has been very positive. In this way our readers learn about international experience as well as the situation of natural science education in Baltic States, and recent investigations can be introduced to a wider scientific audience. During the two-year publishing experience, not only scientists from Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – published their works in the journal. Readers had the opportunity to read articles by Swedish, Norwegian, Cyprian, Turkish, Maltese, Czech, Polish and Belorussian authors. This is significant in the context of admission of the Baltic States in the European Union as even more close and many-sided cooperation may be expected.

It is necessary to emphasize that there are many different reasons for closer international cooperation in the field of natural science education. Firstly, it would be necessary to mention the noted international comparative research in mathematics and natural sciences organised by The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. TIMSS (*Third International Mathematics and Science Study*) research, conducted in 1995 – 1997, is well-known in Baltic States. Actually, it has been the first international comparative research of the kind, which revealed us and our students in the frame of international community. Naturally, the results and findings were quite controversial, but the research has obviously influenced investigations of a smaller scope.

We should also mention the latest international research – TIMSS-R (2003) and the series of PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*) researches. PISA is intended to focus on the issues of natural science education in 2006.

The researches mentioned above and other hold students' knowledge as one of the basic criteria. The sociocultural tendency has been noticed in designing researches when knowledge itself is less important than its application in various kinds of activity. In other words, these are skills and abilities, essential for modern people living in this extremely dynamic world. It is very important to point out the factors which hinder efficient natural science education. The ROSE project (*The Relevance of Science Education*), coordinated by Svein Sjøberg, professor from Oslo University (Norway), can be mentioned as an example. Researchers from Estonia (M. Rannikmäe) and Latvia (J. Gedrovics) have also participated in the project.

Not long ago researchers from Northern and Baltic States as well as representatives from Great Britain participated in a special workshop in Helsinki when the first findings of ROSE project have been discussed. Naturally, it is too early to speak about concrete results, but according to professor Svein Sjøberg, we have reason to believe that the results get a lot of international attention, and that they contain a kind of information that has not been known until now.

We, i.e. the editorial board, would also like to focus on general international research. That is why we decided to publish articles which were prepared in cooperation with researchers from various countries in the first number of this year. Among them you will find an article by Norwegian and Finnish authors (E.K. Henriksen, C. Angell, J. Lavonen, and A. Isnes) which analyses the issues of physics as an optional subject, and an article by Latvian and Lithuanian researchers (V. Lamanaukas, J. Gedrovics, and J. Raipulis) on the problems of natural science education in comprehensive school. We hope that in the future more works of the kind will be published as their effect is undeniable. In the context of globalisation most problems are common to many countries, but on the other hand, the solutions require diversiform approaches.

We wish our readers and future authors a lot of creative success and we also hope that we will have the opportunity to introduce their works to our readers.

Sincerely

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member of Editorial Board of JBSE*