

Dear Readers and Writers!

The first issue of our journal was published one year ago. Since that time the journal has become well known not only among the researchers and science educators in the Baltic States, but also in a number of other European countries as well as overseas. Our journal was much in demand. There was a need to introduce new achievements in science and technology education in this part of the world, and to bring new trends in science education closer to our readers. We are very happy for contributions outside of the Baltic region and welcome any continuous future collaboration.

The European Summit in Barcelona in March 2002 recognised the importance of science and technology education and addressed the issues of increasing interest in scientific studies, hence our journal which has become essential also, during the period of joining the European Union.

In this letter I would like to highlight two hot potatoes: how to raise the level of science education and how to strengthen the networking between different bodies in the science education community. These areas of focus are interrelated, even though they are addressing and highlighting issues in different contexts of science education.

Much research in science education makes reference to its relevance for students - the lack of popularity of science subjects in schools is not new. Students will learn only if they want to learn and there are at least two overlapping strategies: cognitive and motivational, which strongly influence each other and depend on teaching. Students need to see the relevance of learning, as it applies to them personally (their own lives, career expectations etc), or the relevance as it applies to society (wishes of the community, employers, the school, the curriculum). But there is a gap between students' needs and teachers' teaching abilities - society is changing faster than the educational system and it is essential to recognise the cultural diversity in this process.

Hence, science education courses need to have relevant structure: scientific conceptual development is important, intellectual development through science is likely to be one of the major educational goals in society. The development of reasoning skills and the promotion of logical thought, associated with investigatory skills, are important.

All this indicates the need for a paradigm shift: science education is part of education, science teaching is approached from a societal perspective and science education is based on a constructivist principle. Paradigm shift is a societal phenomenon and needs stakeholders' support.

Relevance has been the key word for the World Science Education Conference, held in Malaysia, 2003. A series of recommendations were offered to various bodies and organisations with an interest in science and technology education. This conference showed the need for networking between science teachers as facilitators of relevant learning, researchers as disseminators of research outcomes and developers of a new philosophy, science teachers and scientists who arrange teacher training, industrialists and other members of the social community who are interested in the employment of a well educated younger generation.

I encourage our writers to submit high academic level articles and make them understandable and relevant to teachers and a wide range of stakeholders - this is the only way to move towards a dynamic and knowledge based Europe.

Sincerely

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member of Editorial Board of JBSE*