



Discussion Papers on “New Challenges for Education in Times of Crisis and Major Societal Changes”

INTRODUCTION TO DISCUSSION CONTRIBUTIONS

The special issue entitled *New Challenges for Education in Times of Crisis and Major Societal Change* allowed the authors to reflect on current issues facing education today, in terms of both recent events (the COVID pandemic, the war in Ukraine, migration, the energy crisis, etc.) and of civilisational changes. The common denominator of both may be, on the one hand, fear of the future, uncertainty and instability, and on the other the perception of these phenomena as opportunities for adaptation and growth.

In addition to the articles presented in this issue of the journal, the editorial team decided to generate discussion by addressing individuals and professional associations with two questions:

- 1. What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education?**
- 2. What changes do you expect to see in education as a result of these challenges?**

The answers of the distinguished colleagues are published in this discussion article. Some of them answered the

questions from their personal perspective, some addressed the topic from the perspective of leaders of respected scientific societies. Therefore the author's name is mentioned first in some cases, in others, it is the name of the society for which the contributor(s) answered the questions.

The thought-provoking questions were addressed in various ways. Some contributors answered the questions directly (and we repeat the questions in their contributions), while others chose to compose their answers in the form of an essay. Some tried to provide their specific perspective, others leaned towards a more general perception of the issue. The last contribution shifted the attention from challenges (in education) to tensions (in professional associations).

Let us comment briefly on the themes that resonated the most, from those that were very general to those that were more specific

Education as a driving force in society. Only a well-adjusted education system can stimulate the understanding of events in society as an opportunity for further development. Education is constantly responding to civilisational trans-

formation; this is never finished, nor can it be fixed in one form. In the words of Giuseppina Marsico (ESPLAT), “Education is the outer border of human development, but it is the only border that is never crossed once and for all. It is a borderland of indeterminacy.” At the same time, education does not play a passive role, but rather contributes actively to social changes.

Education as a safeguard of democracy. Contemporary society faces various phenomena such as fanaticism, political and ideological extremism, negative influences from social networks that lead to exclusion, labelling, and misinformation. Although education alone is not enough to address these phenomena, we should not give up on trying to influence young people as much as possible in favour of ethical attitudes, solidarity, mutual support, and critical thinking.

“Critical insight can only thrive in an environment where people are allowed and able to think... If humanity has repeatedly succeeded in causing dictatorships to implode, it is mainly thanks to the emancipatory power of education.” (Marc Deapepe). Conversely, a threat to open education may arise from fundamentalism, with its uncritical support from its followers, an increased need for control, and the perception of differing opinions as expressions of hostility (see e.g. Marit H. Hoveid et al., EERA Executive Board).

The need to support education through research. Research is absolutely essential for the permanent improvement of educational practice. However, such

research is not promoted through the current pressure on speed and quantity of scientific studies (the bibliographic quantitative perspective), but rather through the systematic acquisition of knowledge about educational practice and about the institution of education itself. The independence of research from political and other influences is expected. Universities, with the principle of academic freedom in favour of research, should play a major role here (e.g. Marit H. Hoveid et al., EERA Executive Board).

Overcoming a binary perspective, the need for diversity, prioritising heterogeneity and inclusivity, and eliminating educational inequalities pose significant challenges to which education must respond to prevent further disparities between subpopulations. The emphasis on inclusive education and the promotion of mental health also underline the growing need for the influence of educational psychology on education (Lenka Sokolová, EFPTA, EFPA). Related to this is the need for new methods in the approach to students and the development of professional and personal competences. Cultural psychology promotes the understanding of the specific needs of the individual in education and the reconciliation of dilemmas between ethnic sustainability and adaptation to new cultural environments (see e.g. Giuseppina Marsico, ESPLAT).

Curriculum development, transformation of education in the context of AI, exploration of the use of AI education. This trend is discussed in several



contributions, both in the context of the use of specific teaching and learning systems and in terms of artificial intelligence literacy (e.g. Lucy Avraamidou, ESERA) as a set of skills and competencies that students need to master in order to live productively in society in the future. Strengthening ethical aspects of the use of technological advances such as privacy, responsible online communication, digital professionalism, and digital well-being is also an essential part (e.g. Lenka Sokolová, EFPTA, EFPA).

Our message has also inspired **reflection on specific challenges in pro-**

fessional associations (Jana Poláchová Vašátková and František Tůma from the Czech Association of Educational Research and a discussion contribution from the Pedagogical Society). The need to involve professional societies in addressing current local issues while maintaining contact with colleagues from other countries and transferring the benefits of internalisation to educational topics is worth mentioning.

We hope readers will find inspiration in the discussion contributions to join and reflect on the topic and possibly even to elaborate concrete practical endeavours.

Issue Editors



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Her research is associated with theoretical and empirical explorations of what it means to widen and diversify STEM participation in school and out-of-school settings through the lens of intersectionality. She pays special attention to the science identity trajectories of under-represented groups.

What Do You See as the Main Challenge(s) for Education?

Challenge #1: Need to prioritise diversity and inclusion. Inequities have persisted in sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, broadly construed as STEM. For decades, discussions about the racialised and gendered nature of the dominant STEM culture and practices have garnered the attention of educational stakeholders committed to social justice. Research shows that intersecting structural inequalities persist, and researchers have documented exclusionary practices of schooling in different parts of the world.

Challenge #2: The need to address global challenges and especially climate crises. In the awakening of the second millennium, the world finds itself facing a series of globally interconnected and locally specific challenges: climate change, the quality and security of food, water and air pollution, political instability, refugee

crises, poverty, migration, racisms, sexism, gender bias, and various other forms of sociopolitical and economic inequality and oppression. These challenges create new needs and raise expectations for education, especially in addressing goals related to sustainability.

Challenge #3: The use of AI in education with a focus on ethics and biases. With the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in industry, education, and everyday life, children are living in and facing increasingly AI-powered society. In the last decade, researchers have been examining how to participate in this AI era by exploring the use of AI in education. AI tools, such as intelligent tutoring systems, chatbots, or automated feedback models, are promising as they have the potential to reduce teachers' workloads, optimise teaching, and increase students' interest (Heeg & Avraamidou, 2023). More recently, research efforts have started to expand from teaching "with" AI, to teaching "about" AI, as contemporary reform



documents have widely recognised “AI literacy” as a new set of skills and competencies that future student generations need to function responsibly and ethically in an AI-powered society. Despite the great potential of AI tools for education, there exist concerns in relation to ethics and biases, and hence, the challenge for education is to promote *critical* AI literacy that sheds light on the potential harm caused by AI technologies.

What changes do you expect to see in education in relation to these challenges?

1. Better utilisation of out-of-school places for learning, given that students acquire much of their knowledge in informal learning environments, outside classrooms. For example, students acquire knowledge through social media, visits with their families, for example to aquariums, zoos, parks, and museums and in general through spending time pursuing

hobbies, playing games, or being involved in any everyday activities.

2. Re-envisioning of teacher preparation programmes in the light of the need to create socially, linguistically, and culturally diverse societies. This will require a shift away from frameworks that focus on knowledge and skills to more comprehensive frameworks that prioritise pedagogies of care and resistance and where the construct of identity is at the forefront.

3. Prioritisation of critical AI literacy as part of national curricula as well as higher education. Despite the growing attention to the ethical challenges related to artificial intelligence, little attention has been paid to the critical consumption of AI. To ensure safe, fair, and trustworthy AI applications in education, curriculum designers, educational programme developers, and policymakers are expected to pay more attention to issues related to ethics and biases, which will have implications for how AI tools are utilised in education.



THE CZECH PEDAGOGICAL SOCIETY / ČESKÁ PEDAGOGICKÁ SPOLEČNOST THE CPS EXECUTIVE BOARD LED BY OTO DYMOKURSKÝ

www.cpds.cz

The Czech Pedagogical Society is a scientific society that brings together researchers, teachers, and other professionals interested in pedagogy and related disciplines. The society publishes the journal Pedagogical Orientation, which focuses on current issues in educational theory and practice, school policy, and the preparation of future teachers. The Society also organises conferences on current issues of education in the Czech Republic.

What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education?

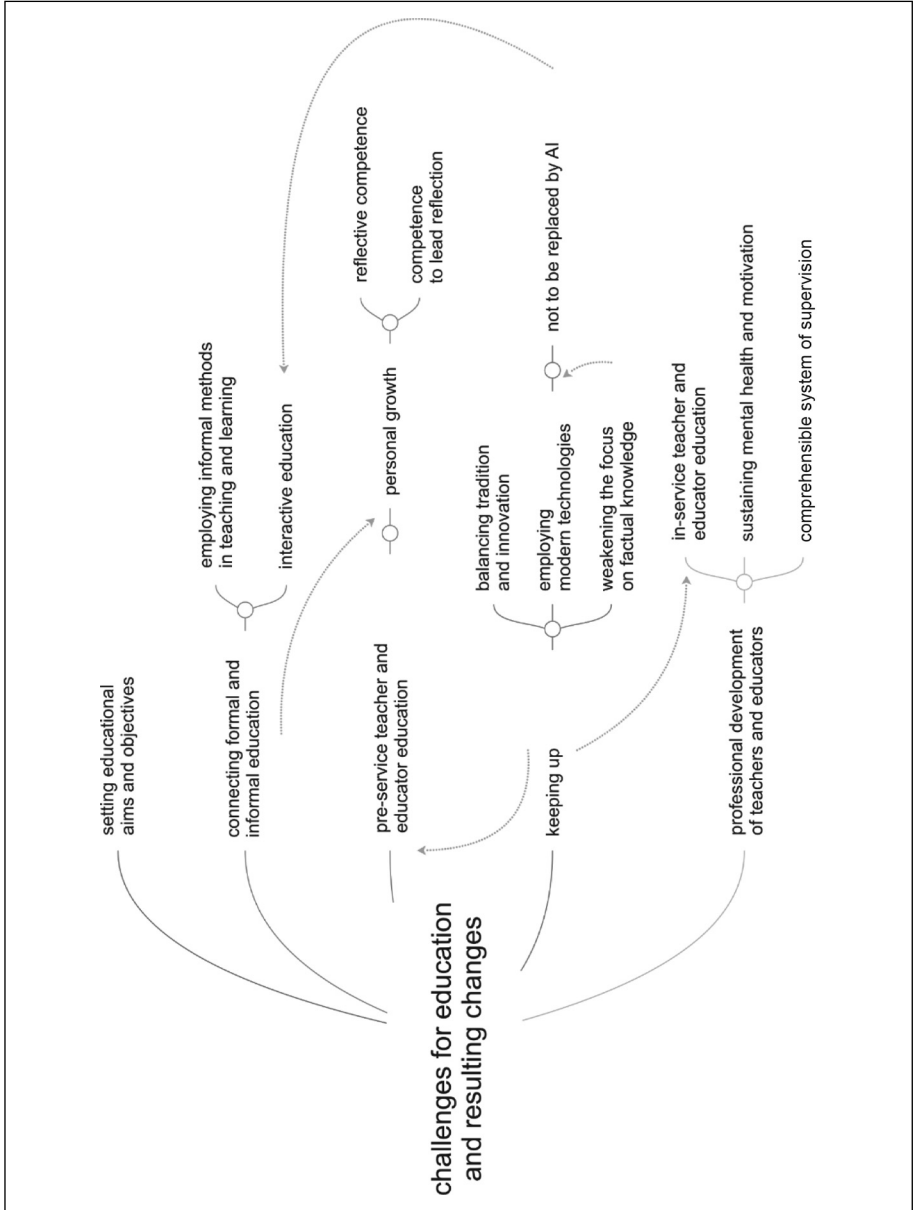
One of the greatest challenges for education (and for school education in particular) **is the subjective and intuitive nature of educational processes.** After millennia of thought, we still lack solid answers for key epistemological questions. On the one hand, theorists have only in the past century begun to cultivate our understanding of how the young human mind learns and develops. On the other hand, practical educational tasks have to be dealt with every day, and so teachers and educators rely almost exclusively on intuition.

In the realm of education, there is an inherent inertia with which general ideas, as well as practical guidelines, are culturally transferred from one generation to the other. Any evidence that could be generated by procedures built on trial and error, experimental designs, or rational analysis is restricted by the length of the feedback loop (it may take years or decades to see those effects of education that matter) and the heterogeneity of the subjects and processes. As a result, there is a minimum of credible feedback on any and all educational strategies.

Historically, we see the practical consequences: we see how tradition provides comfort and how innovations are met with suspicion. We see the persistence of what has been labelled **Schwarze Pädagogik**. We see teachers and educators who accept and allow minimal feedback because on the receiving end of education they perceive subjects, not partners with a voice. We see charlatans who are confident in their beliefs on education. We see conservative views that prevent schools from reacting more dynamically to smaller and larger societal changes.

What changes do you expect to see in education in relation to these challenges?

Possible changes in the future might include mobilising support for **systematic education of teachers and educators**, as good educational practices are often counterintuitive, directing **research attention towards the cultural aspects of education and improving communication channels between academia and practice.**





Challenges for education and resulting changes

1. Setting educational aims and objectives
2. Connecting formal and informal education
 - 2.1 Employing informal methods in teaching and learning
 - 2.2 Interactive education
3. Keeping up
 - 3.1 Balancing tradition and innovation
 - 3.2 Employing modern technologies
 - 3.2.1 Not to be replaced by AI
 - 3.3 Weakening the focus on factual knowledge
4. Pre-service teacher and educator education
 - 4.1 Personal growth
 - 4.2 Reflective competence
 - 4.3 Competence in leading reflection
5. Professional development of teachers and educators
 - 5.1 In-service teacher and educator education
 - 5.2 Sustaining mental health and motivation
 - 5.3 Comprehensible system of supervision



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Giuseppina Marsico named her contribution to the discussion panel Education at the Crossroad

What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education?

In many parts of the world we are facing large-scale migration (from East to West and from the South to the North of the planet), and internal migration within geo-political regions is also increasing rapidly (e.g. within European countries, from rural to urban areas in China, etc.). Consequently, immigrant children are now experiencing new countries, new environments, and new school contexts (Marsico, 2018; Marsico & Dazzani, 2022). National and ethnic identity have a great impact on the well-being of immigrant students. The complex interplay between support for maintaining ethnicity and the responses from the receiving society in terms of pressing for assimilation will determine the strength of identity. A strong ethnic and national identity seems to

correlate positively with adaptation to a new cultural environment and then being acquainted with one's own ethnicity and the cultural origin of ourselves and of others seems to lead to valuable outcomes for both the emotional and cognitive engagement of immigrant students. In other words, diversity matters! After all, **inter-cultural communication, multilingualism, and diversity** are the reality in many countries all over the world.

What changes do you expect to see in education in relation to these challenges?

I do hope that discussing the articulation of theoretical knowledge, methodological instances, and culturally situated meaningful interventions (in a specific educational context) for promoting a **cultural approach to educational issues**



will become the core point of the agenda for many countries.

In this vein, I have proposed a Manifesto for Future Education that cannot be but a Manifesto of Cultural Psychology of Education (Marsico, 2017). Here I synthesise it into five main stances:

1. Education is a movement at the core of societal change in all its different forms – from kindergartens to vocational schools and to lifelong learning. Education – understood as goal-oriented personal movement – re-structures personal lives both inside and outside the school. All in all, the direction of considering educational movement from the perspective of the developing person in various social contexts has been present in a number of ways. My proposal stems from Cultural Psychology – as it has been developed in recent decades – and tries to examine how human experience is culturally organised within the educational context. This fits the global processes of most countries becoming multicultural in their social orders.

2. Education is the outer border of human development, but it is the only border which is never crossed once and for all. It is a borderland of indeterminacy. It is our unreachable horizon that moves with us. At every step, as we move forward to a new and higher level of education, the horizon is moving as well. The idea beyond this conceptualisation of the educational processes is the notion of *being on the move* within culturally organised life contexts (school, family, church, etc.) in specific spatio-temporal coordinates.

Grappling with the uncertainty is an unavoidable characteristic of human socio-cultural locomotion, which implies crossing the borders between different social settings within the insurmountable limit of the irreversible time.

3. Cultural psychology axiomatically presupposes that socio-psychological phenomena are liminal as they emerge in the border zones between different individual and collective states (past-present-future; inside-border-outside, etc.). In the same vein, the emergence of change should also be investigated in its processual nature and within its liminal emerging conditions. My focus is, therefore, on the liminal phenomena in education in our contemporary globalised world (e.g. relationships, transitions, and negotiations occurring between different cultures and contexts).

4. Educational discourse has become truly interdisciplinary, and its applications in a vast variety of cultural contexts need to be informed about cultural expectations. In that inter-disciplinary synthesis, the knowledge base of contemporary cultural psychology of education is increasingly international. At the same time, any application of know-how in the area of education in any society remains local.

5. Cultural psychology of education calls for the situatedness of the human experience and the theoretical generalisations of the teleogenetic nature of the education. By providing a new possible horizon to education (which is ultimately about the way in which we *become human*) it tries to overcome the schizophrenic variety of



small interventions subservient of this or that new trend, new request, or new emerging problem. Cultural psychology of education proposes a renewed idea of educational intervention not as a *patchwork* of practices any more, but an *artwork* in which theoretical knowledge, methodological instances, and culturally situated meaningful interventions (in a specific

educational context) are indissolubly interwoven. Thus, education, from the perspective of cultural psychology, deals with both practice and theory, where practices are not just a matter of actions, but they encapsulate theory, while theory illuminates the course of the actions and provides the general framework for understanding human conduct.

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EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (EERA)

EERA EXECUTIVE BOARD: MARIT H. HOVEID (PRESIDENT), MARIA P. FIGUEIREDO (SECRETARY GENERAL), LUCIAN CIOLAN (SECRETARY-GENERAL-ELECT), ANDREAS HAJDER (TREASURER), AND FABIO DOVIGO (NETWORKS' REPRESENTATIVE ON COUNCIL)

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The aim of EERA is to further high-quality educational research for the benefit of education and society. The association's activities, such as the annual conference, seasonal schools for emerging researchers, and publishing, build on and promote free and open dialogue and critical discussion and take a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to theory, methods, and research ethics.

The EERA Executive board members named their contribution to the discussion panel An Outlook on Societal and Individual Challenges for Education Research – a Perspective from the European Educational Research Association (EERA).

The European Educational Research Association (EERA)'s main aim is to "further high-quality educational research for the benefit of education and society. High-quality research not only acknowledges its own context, but also recognises wider, transnational contexts with their social, cultural, and political similarities and differences." Doing educational research is not necessarily a self-evident practice within universities across Europe today. Receiving funding for educational research is unevenly distributed across European higher education systems. A common demand for educational research is to find *what works* in education, basically to find ways of making education as efficient as possible in terms of the cost-benefit ratio and the provision of a relevant workforce, not forgetting, however, to systematically

ask ourselves as researchers for what and for whom these ways are effective.

In the current times of unrest, war, and religious and cultural tensions across Europe and beyond, the two questions posed by *Studia Pedagogika* are important ones to address. We will address them in the light of our aim, which is to further high-quality research for education and society. But what kind of challenges does this pose for educational researchers?

What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education?

Research should be a basic activity in universities. Research is a way of systematically acquiring knowledge about phenomena, in this case about education as a central practice and institution in



society. In open democratic societies doing research in universities, independent of political and other pre-determination, is crucial – that is academic freedom. In other words, high-quality education needs educational research to critically assess and help develop its practices on the individual and institutional levels. Hence, a lack of funding for research within the field of education (on all levels) is a possible threat to democratic developments in society.

In this contribution we point to traits of today's zeitgeist that pose profound challenges to education on several levels, from primary to higher education. Education is the one institution in society which, through its practices, could either enhance or create opposition to ways of handling these challenges. To handle them will require the possibility of taking a critical stance. A critical stance is at the core of educational research.

We identify four growing societal challenges (not excluding others, but saying these are at the forefront in society and for education today):

Fundamentalism requires the unwavering and uncritical endorsement of its followers and thus represents a threat to open and free education, whether the driving force is political or religious or a combination of both. Fundamentalism creates a distinction between them and us – either you are one of us or you are not. If you are not, you are presumably our enemy. This way of creating an external enemy is a “good” strategy if the aim is to dominate. What then has to be controlled

is what people know. A society where knowledge is open to discussion and criticism must, in other words, be avoided. Fundamentalist movements that reject others' knowledge and beliefs and tend to feed on conspiracy theories and produce fake news are growing today. Fundamentalism is a threat to education because it restricts humans in developing thinking, reflection, and critical judgement. The narrow-minded thinking of people who subscribe to fundamentalist ideas and the organisations they create usually become authoritarian – hence the basic aims of education are at stake.

The strangling of academic freedom is seriously damaging to education on all levels. This applies both to teachers in schools and educators and researchers in higher education. The idea that education from primary to university should be monitored, assessed, and made accountable seems to have reached a level in societies that call themselves democratic where all trust in the autonomy of educators and researchers is gradually lost. This development is more easily seen in fundamentalist or authoritarian regimes and is more easily overlooked in societies that call themselves democratic. We believe educational researchers have a tremendous task in front of them – both in terms of addressing what happens on the societal and individual levels when controlling mechanisms become authoritarian and lead to a lack of transparency and openness to critique. Hope may lie in the claim posed by the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2020) about the “uncontrollability of the world”.



Machine teaching and learning that forgets the potentials of the human being is another great challenge. One of the main 21st-century skills is defined as digital competency. Anyone who has one- or two-year-olds around has most probably seen how clever they have already become at handling the digital devices in their surroundings. They have learned through imitation of people around them. Replacing books and worksheets with digital tools and programs in school that can always accommodate the need for new and more challenging tasks for the student is seen by some as a revolution, to the extent that some think it could replace both the book and the teacher. Replacing teaching and learning with a machine, in its most instrumental versions, is reductionist, because it reduces human sociability to the same as that of a machine. Humans are different. A fundamental trait of teaching and learning is its relationality; the relation between humans (and animals) is qualitatively different from that between a human and a machine – no matter how “intelligent” that machine may be.

A rather persistent challenge in education, which continues to be addressed by educational research, is **educational inequalities**. Research shows that certain social groups, defined by axes of inequality such as gender, social background/class, immigrant background, ethnicity/language background, or disability, still suffer certain disadvantages in the uptake of education. What is needed is an inclusive school and higher education that fosters the educational achievement

and attainment of all as well as belonging and subjective wellbeing for all. While educational research has already identified manifold solutions, implementing changes in the various education systems that exist appears to be difficult.

What changes do you expect to see in education in relation to these challenges?

We have identified four main challenges that pose a threat to both education and research. For EERA the core question is in what way educational research can achieve its aim in the face of these challenges. A quick fix does not exist as these challenges are deeply embedded in societies and in recent decades have created cultural patterns that do not change easily. Educational research, as a strand of social sciences, necessarily believes in the need to pose critical questions and to enhance our knowledge about what is happening as a way of serving society. The stark contrasts between education systems across Europe and beyond – with reference to these challenges and the tensions they create – is something we are quite certain will increase. Our faith as educationalists lies in the trust we need to have in teachers and researchers, and what they can do in education. In other words, peace-building is a bottom-up process. It is in the classrooms, between humans, that trust and love are lived and experienced. Without this kind of basic (human) learning, the violence embedded in the challenges we have identified can easily come to domi-



nate, even more than today. Promoting educational research for the benefit of individuals and societies requires us to bring forth and discuss the values and be-

liefs that education and research are built on. For educational researchers, this is a never-ending process and one that now is probably more important than ever.



MARC DEPAEPE

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Professor Depaepe contributes actively and also served as a chair of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education, the Belgian-Dutch Society for the History of Education, and as vice-chair of the Internationale Gesellschaft für historische und systematische Schulbuchforschung in Germany. His main research interests are the history of educational and behavioural sciences, the international historiography of education, and the history of colonial and postcolonial education. He has published and co-published more than 500 works in 17 different languages..

Professor Depaepe named his contribution to the discussion panel From “Educational Challenges” to “Challenging Education”?

Recently, I was asked two questions by the editors of a pedagogical journal in the Czech Republic, with a view to compiling a special issue, which I had to answer in a maximum of four pages: 1. What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education? 2. What changes do you expect to see in education in relation to these challenges?

Here are my answers, which I have treated together, because the second automatically follows from the first. But first, a comment regarding Belgian education policy. Since 1988, “education” in our country has ceased to be the responsibility of the federal government, but has been transferred to the regional governments. Hence my focus on Flanders (where I live), at least as far as the starting point is concerned.

If current policy makers and education experts in Flanders are to be believed, our education system is currently struggling with two major problems: on the one hand, a decline in quality, and

on the other, a shortage of teachers. Two complaints that incidentally go well beyond the regional context of the Flemish region, but that is generally not taken into account, also because the diagnosis, as well as the possible proposed remedies, is in any case linked to the specificity of the Flemish context. Without going into further detail, we can, for example, refer here to the call for centralised tests, according to the competent minister “to keep a permanent finger on the pulse of all pupils, to give schools the opportunity to compare themselves with similar schools and to intervene more quickly and more specifically” ... because “to measure is to know”! Figures and knowledge: apparently that’s what it comes down to; “data-driven” and “evidence-based” appear to be the key, not only to a good education policy, but also to good education research, which, by the way, must be (partly?) “policy-supportive”. Just as the international-comparative polls (PISA, TIMMS, etc.) are (they are



supposed to support the finding of that quality decline). Although there are some things to be said about the possible over-estimation of the importance of these figures, I will not devote this short contribution to them. Nor will I venture an internal critique of their realisation – I am undoubtedly too little versed in statistics for that. Even though I know, thanks to historical research, that the nature and content of the questions (what they measure and especially what they do not measure), the manner of analysis, presentation, reporting, and the like are to a large extent co-determined by the prevailing mentalities on the socio-political and ideological levels. But even for that, the space provided is far too limited.

Perhaps one figure anyway, because so far I have said nothing about the second problem, the teacher shortage. The Flemish education dossier (March 2023) shows that for each teacher there are, on average, 7.3 pupils in school. Of course, it would be rather short-sighted to conclude from this that there is no shortage of teachers at all (because this shortage occurs mainly in certain disciplines, in certain sectors, and at certain levels), but this 7.3 shows unmistakably that different standards apply with regard to class sizes in 2023 than was the case, say, a hundred years ago. In primary education, for example, there were, on average, five to six times as many children in one class. That this downward trend is related to the changed views on pedagogy over the past century is obvious. The tightly managed authoritarian and disciplinary approach of yesteryear, it

is said, had to make way for more appropriate guidance in a “cosier” atmosphere. Yet it should not be forgotten that this also required a socioeconomic foundation of prosperity to pay for it. But this aside, what is striking today is that there seems to be less and less unanimity on the desirability of these underlying pedagogical developments. Some even seize on them as the cause and explanatory factor of the first problem, the contemporary failure of education. So-called “fun pedagogy” (of course, usually without much reference to the historical roots of the more child-centered reform pedagogy and new education from the late 19th century onwards) has, in their view, caused students’ knowledge to deteriorate... So grist to the mill of critics, who often, not without a hint of nostalgia, claim that education used to be so much better, even in terms of teacher quality.

Enough, then, for a historian of education to crawl behind his computer. Because the above complaint requires some nuance and relativity anyway. After all, not everything can simply be lumped together. For those who look at things from a long-term perspective, there is ultimately much more grey than just white or black. So who knows, by further historical contextualisation, we may arrive at other, possibly even real, or, at least, more fundamental educational problems for the future...

Of course, the critics have a point. Overall, certain types of knowledge among students will indeed have deteriorated. And yes, teacher education also



has a problem, especially with intake. Examples are legion. Let me name just one. With regard to the bachelor of education programme – the former normal school – at the institution where I myself received part of my education, there are voices calling for the establishment of a training programme without second language teaching, because this is a stumbling-block for many students. Even at the university, I had to observe in several thesis students that knowledge of French – especially grammar – had lost much of its importance. But to conclude from this that the entire repertoire of knowledge and skills of the current generation is inadequate seems to me to be rather exaggerated. Anyone who dares to differentiate will soon see that there are also areas in which progress may have been made. Dealing with the media, for example. Not only because many new electronic devices and digital platforms have appeared in recent decades, but also because communication skills themselves, all in all, have not declined. I remember television broadcasts from the 1960s, in which college students were questioned about exam stress, and were literally tongue-tied. And what about their empowerment as such? Would that also have declined in recent decades? Or is the reverse rather the case? In any case, the role models presented to young people in media and advertising today present themselves as “autonomous” individuals, with independent opinions and choices...

In short, the social value, as well as the importance, of knowledge and skills

cannot be separated from certain trends in society. Such as this one that has made language education – possibly to our shame? – increasingly focused on verbal communication rather than the formal ground rules of speech. Likewise with the now-fashionable rejection of the psychological principles of constructivism, which, at the time, wished to place self-discovery and problem-solving learning in the foreground as an alternative to the often unthinking external learning of encyclopedic knowledge. To lump together all these otherwise in themselves rather disparate things and see them as (post)modern reactions against everything of value in the tradition seems to me to make little sense. Here, too, clear differentiation and nuance are needed. Ditto for the, allegedly, in didactics (and/or instructional psychology) all-too-long repressed “schoolmaster wisdom”, which is ultimately much more than a pedagogical bag of tricks accumulated through experience. As history abundantly demonstrates, continuity and innovation are not at all mutually exclusive. In fact, both are, in my view, complementary. Like, for example, student “well-being” and mastery of subject matter. Yet in contemporary debate, both are usually placed in direct opposition to each other. Rightly so? I don’t think so... Flanders may have declined in terms of knowledge in internationally comparative polls, but on the scale of suicide among young people, our country is, alas, riding high.

So perhaps we should also polarise less in the field of education; a social



phenomenon that seems to be manifesting itself more and more not only in politics, but also (and especially?) in social media, where, because of the underlying algorithms, people have come to believe even more strongly than before in their own rightness (and therefore depict all other opinions as nonsense). One of the possible remedies for this, it seems to me, is to avoid binary thinking models, in order to really make room for more nuance and, linked to that, insight into the complexity of things (which, at least to a certain extent, need not exclude the inclusion of supposedly incompatible visions). And that brings me seamlessly to the two points I want to make here myself, one concerning research on parenting and education and, consequently, also one in relation to pedagogical praxis as such.

Because of the ever-increasing emphasis on empirical-analytical and preferably quantitative-statistical approaches (which obviously have their own legitimacy), an atomisation, as it were, of the problems that are studied has occurred in the practice of educational sciences. Complex issues from the world of education are fragmented and treated in very small particles, which threatens the loss of a global overview of what is “of value for time and eternity” (as Comenius put it). Without wishing to cast myself here as a kind of syndicalist of one’s own field – the history of education, say educational historiography – it is obvious to me that the holistic character of the so-called fundamental pedagogy or foundations in education (which is broader than didactics and

instructional sciences) must not be lost. Generalising disciplines such as the history, philosophy, and sociology of education therefore remain, in my view, indispensable in the curriculum of any pedagogical education, that of teachers included.

For a long time, people have liked to operationalise the content of education – from low to high – in (behaviourally designed?) goals and attainment targets, which has easily pushed the idea of the formation of an integral person into the background. Yet the very idea of “formation” – called “*Bildung*” in the German-speaking tradition – was one of the great pedagogical innovations since the Enlightenment. That cultural movement wanted to make all education precisely “educative” or “formative” education (“*erziehende Unterricht*”). In my opinion, it would not be a bad thing to restore this time-honoured link between formation and education, especially since, in the Western world, advancing secularisation, technologisation, and materialistic progress have left an ideological void. More than ever, young people appear to be in need of a new kind of ethic of personalism, in which values such as human rights, tolerance, respect, diversity, plurality, service, and the like are more prevalent, for the danger that lurking religious fanaticism and/or political-ideological extremism, whether from the left or the right, may seek to exploit all too eagerly the lack of recruiting images of humanity and society for young people is far from imaginary. Especially in times of geopolitical tensions and – unfortunately – ongoing conflicts and wars,



which, through the power of today's arsenal of weapons, can, moreover, threaten the survival of our planet. Add to this the uncertainties caused by climate change, migratory flows, related or unrelated, and the unequal distribution of wealth around the world, and it is easy to understand why young people try to escape the hopelessness and desolation of existence they experience through drugs, crime, violence, extremism, or indifference, a couldn't care attitude, and so on.

But perhaps we should also learn to shift social problems a little less toward education. We ourselves have described this social trend as part of the increasing "educationalisation" (a process that is difficult to define, but in which excessive attention to "taking young people by the hand", which usually leads to greater dependence, is never out of the question). Too often opinion makers as well as political leaders believe that the school can formulate answers to all the difficulties that arise in society, although we know quite well from history that there is no direct link between educational goals and their outcome, in both the short and long term. This is precisely why it would be good if societal expectations toward schools were tempered somewhat, which, at the same time, puts into perspective the current discussion about the future "challenges" of education. Just because a societal problem has been shifted to the educational curriculum does not mean that it is immediately solved...

However, to conclude from this that there should also be less education is, of course, out of the question. Critical insight can only thrive in an environment where people are allowed and able to think. And that, in my opinion, still happens best in a school that is more than a diploma factory! If humanity has succeeded time and again in causing dictatorships to implode, it is mainly thanks to the emancipatory power of education. Hence my plea, in line with the best that "dialogical" philosophy has produced, to provide opportunities for life-enhancing encounters with teachers. These, while extremely rare as a rule, have nevertheless overwhelmingly proved in the past to have lifelong after-effects. To be clear: my continuing demand for such "challenging" education is not at all dictated by any nostalgia for the liberating sixties or whatever, but by the contemporary concern for truly "educative" or "formative" education. It is obvious that this requires undoing the negative image of both education and the teacher that has taken shape in recent decades. In order to be an inspiring model of identification for the young people of the future, the teacher urgently needs to (re?)gain ownership of the profession. That this all sounds very utopian and difficult to achieve is obvious. But as a historian of education, what else can I do but to continue to hope for and trust in the power of true educating on the one hand and the talents and honest aspirations of the coming generations on the other?



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What do you see as the main challenges for psychology education?

Psychology education plays a crucial role in shaping future generations of well-prepared mental health professionals, researchers, and advocates. However, psychology courses are also included in the training of other professionals, for example, teachers, healthcare professionals, social workers, etc., and they are part of secondary school curricula in many countries around the world. As the field of psychology evolves, new challenges continually arise in the realm of education and training for a wide range of target groups. Understanding these challenges, educators can devise strategies to improve the quality of psychology education and ensure its relevance in a changing world.

One of the primary challenges in psychology education lies in **the development of the curriculum**. The field of psychology is vast and is developing rapidly,

making it essential to keep the content relevant and up-to-date and at the same time fitting the purposes and needs of a specific target group (e.g. future psychologists, non-psychologist professionals, or secondary school students). The development of a comprehensive curriculum requires fundamental theories and research findings to be balanced with emerging evidence and contemporary issues, including current global and local threats such as pandemics, war conflicts, and emerging mental health or environmental issues. Additionally, educators must ensure that the curriculum reflects multiple perspectives, thus providing students with a well-rounded understanding of psychology within an interdisciplinary context.

Psychology education should address the pressing **need for diversity and inclusion**. Historically, much of the psychological research has been conducted with Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) populations. However, psychology educators



must acknowledge and challenge this bias, ensuring that their curriculum includes research and theories that reflect different cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Through doing so, future professionals can better understand the complexities of human behaviour within a global context and provide culturally sensitive care.

Ethics is a crucial part of psychology education, and promoting **ethical practices** is an ongoing challenge. Educators must instil ethical principles, professional standards, and responsibility in their students' training, regardless of the target group. In addition, they should incorporate case studies and ethical dilemmas to improve the critical thinking skills necessary for ethical decision making. By emphasising the importance of ethical behaviour and conducting research in an ethically responsible manner, educators produce psychologically literate and competent professionals who prioritise their clients' well-being.

With the rapid **advancement of technology**, psychology educators should be able to recognise its benefits and navigate its challenges. Integrating technology into psychology education offers various opportunities, such as online learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and data analysis tools. However, educators must ensure that ethical considerations, privacy concerns, and the potential for information overload are adequately addressed within the curriculum. Additionally, training students in responsible online communication, digital profes-

sionalism, and digital well-being is crucial. Similarly to other areas of education, psychology educators cannot ignore the impact of generative artificial intelligence on learning and teaching.

Although there is a focus on research and evidence-based practice, psychology often faces a **gap between academic research and real-world practice**. This gap arises as a result of various factors, such as limited communication channels, differing priorities, and difficulty integrating research findings into practice. Psychology educators should promote collaboration between academia and practitioners to bridge this gap. Encouraging students to participate in fieldwork, internships, and research projects with faculty members can provide practical experience and foster a more holistic understanding of psychology.

What changes do you expect to see in psychology education in relation to these challenges?

Psychology education faces numerous challenges in the modern age, but these challenges also present opportunities for growth and improvement. By continually updating curricula, addressing diversity and inclusion, promoting ethical practices, embracing technology, bridging the research-practice gap, and integrating mental health education and awareness into psychology, psychology educators can educate and train professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complexities of the human mind and behaviour.



With **mental health** as an emerging critical concern in contemporary society, we can expect a greater emphasis on psychology education. With the increasing incidence of mental health problems worldwide, it is vital to equip people with the knowledge and skills to understand, prevent, and address these issues. Psychology education plays a central role in this regard, as it allows individuals to understand various aspects of mental health, including the underlying causes, symptoms, and treatment approaches. Moreover, psychological education can promote compassion, empathy, and de-stigmatisation of mental health disorders. By fostering a deeper understanding of mental health, psychology education empowers people to support and act as advocates for those in need, making a significant impact on general well-being and social development. Therefore, **prioritising psychology education** is crucial to address the ever-growing demand for mental health services and ultimately to promote a healthier and more inclusive society. Psychology education has a strong potential to develop useful life skills and psychological and mental health literacy, not only among professional psychologists, but also in non-psychologists and young people who study psychology as a secondary school subject. By **promoting pre-tertiary psychology education**, we can equip the young generation with important skills of scientific and critical thinking, self-understanding, and self-care. These can be continuously developed and improved in their further professional training. As we move forward, it is crucial

to adapt psychology education to meet the demands of an ever-changing world and to promote psychology as a force for positive change in individuals and communities.

Reflecting the changes in society, the psychology education of future psychologists needs a focus on **developing both professional and transferable competencies**. The use of new technologies requires not only new skills for students and educators, but also a redefinition of teaching methods, evaluation, and research. The implementation of AI into psychology education, research, and practice will probably gradually change the established paradigms; therefore, mental health professionals must be educated and trained as critical thinkers, flexible and reflective practitioners who will be able to face these requirements.

Fortunately, some of the trends and needs mentioned above have already been reflected in the updates of competency guidelines recently published by the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EuroPsy – the European Certificate in Psychology, July 2023) and the American Psychological Association (APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major, Version 3.0, August 2023) for the training of psychologists, and in the activities and recommendations of international organisations that support the teaching of psychology at different levels of education, for example the European Federation of Psychology Teachers' Associations (EFPTA), the European Society for Psychology Learning and Teaching (ESPLAT), or the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP).



THE CZECH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION / ČESKÁ ASOCIACE PEDAGOGICKÉHO VÝZKUMU

ON BEHALF OF THE CERA EXECUTIVE BOARD: JANA POLÁCHOVÁ
VAŠÁTKOVÁ (PRESIDENT), FRANTIŠEK TŮMA (MEMBER)

www.capv.cz

The Czech Educational Research Association (CAPV) is a professional organisation whose mission is to improve the quality of education through educational research, to promote the exchange of information among educational researchers, and to disseminate the findings of educational research and highlight their contribution to practice. CAPV organises annual conferences on educational research. CAPV is a member of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) and the Council of Scientific Societies of the Czech Republic at the Czech Academy of Sciences (RVS)

In this paper, we were asked by the editors to discuss the current challenges in education and what changes we expect in this field. Building on previous work (Poláchová Vašátková & Tůma, 2022) and reflecting on our three-year (2021–2023) experience of being members of the Executive Board of the Czech Educational Research Association (Česká asociace pedagogického výzkumu, CAPV), we respond to the editors' questions from the perspective of this NGO by outlining some of the main challenges or even tensions that we have observed. Although our perceptions that we present here may not be fully shared by all CAPV members, we offer some insights into the functioning of the organisation and hope to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics that educational research has been facing recently. First, we briefly introduce the CAPV. After that, we present two main tensions in the functioning of the organisation: we

focus on the global vs. the local, and then focus on complexity vs. diversity.

According to its Statutes, the CAPV is a professional organisation (established in 1992) that aims at enhancing the quality of education through educational research, promoting the exchange of information among educational researchers, and disseminating educational research findings and highlighting their contribution to practice (CAPV Statutes). As we have shown elsewhere (Poláchová Vašátková & Tůma, 2022), CAPV members are recruited from a wide range of institutions – besides faculties of education and arts, where teacher education, (adult) education, social, and special education programmes are run, CAPV members are affiliated with faculties and universities that do not offer courses in the field of education. In addition, 18 members out of 242 (as of 2022) come from non-university organisations. It follows that



CAPV members hold diverse expectations and needs, and they understand education and educational research in a broad, interdisciplinary sense. In addition, members encounter other actors in the contexts of their workplace institutions or organisations on a daily basis, which only adds to the diversity of expectations for educational research and causes two main tensions.

The tension between the global and local

The global orientation is reflected in the Czech national educational policies – for example, world-leading research findings and results are the most appreciated (as the quality is defined on the national level by M17+), and publications in journals indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus database are the ones most valued in the workplaces of the majority of CAPV members. In a similar vein, according to the Standard Projects scheme provided by the Czech Science Foundation, i.e. the only nationwide funding body for basic research, results that are of “international significance” are expected and should result in increasing the team’s “competitiveness in the international environment” (GACR, p. 4). Research results are supposed also to be accessible to the worldwide audience, and yet they have a major impact on the local funding of institutions, as well as individuals.

Current expectations require a high level of internationalisation, including, for instance, researchers’ foreign lan-

guage proficiency, familiarity with the state of the art of (educational) research in the international literature, the ability to formulate problems relevant to the international audience, the ability to select a suitable journal, write a manuscript for that journal, etc. This may be an incentive to focus on issues of international interest as researchers are supposed to publish in international journals. The CAPV’s global orientation needs to be understood in this context. So far, it has been clearly reflected, for instance, in its firm integration within the European Educational Research Association (EERA), in the presence of at least one international keynote address at every CAPV annual conference, in the English-language bulletin that has been sent to the members every year since 2021, and in the focus of some of the workshops that the CAPV (co-)organised. Support for international networking in education is also one of the priorities for further development.

In contrast, the CAPV’s local orientation is clearly reflected in its name and mission, which emphasises the Czech context. Educational research is essentially culturally rooted and sensitive to the local community responding exclusively to the rapidly-changing world context. The issues are relevant for teachers, parents, etc. and therefore linked to the mother tongue as the local educational actors too need to benefit from the research results. This is reflected in the context of the CAPV bulletins, as they have traditionally focused on books and journals published in Czechia and, mostly, in Czech. It should



be pointed out that this local orientation is crucial – Czech teachers, students, colleagues, and members of the lay public are, by default, exposed to concepts, methods, and research findings specific to education and educational research predominantly, if not exclusively, in the Czech language.

It follows that the activities of the CAPV, including conferences, bulletins, and workshops, are in a way bi-directional, aiming in both of these directions. We assume that both of these orientations will be maintained and need to be in balance as “education needs to be fully active on both fronts – the local one and the international one” (Mareš, 2022, p. 44).

The tension between complexity and diversity

As mentioned above, in the context of a global orientation, the CAPV supports a number of activities that may help researchers enter the international field. However, different stages of professional development and needs can be differentiated within educational researchers: besides striving to become (more) visible internationally, researchers may, for instance, need to communicate their findings to stakeholders (in the broad sense: teachers, school directors, members of the public administration, business-people, decision makers, and politicians, among others), seek practice-oriented applications of their research, or apply for research funding. Similarly, emerging researchers, teachers, or members of non-university organisations, who are also

among the CAPV members, may have different needs. It follows that it may be desirable to group members according to their needs or interests, and then tailor the association’s activities with respect to the diverse groups. We can refer to this strategy as specialisation. However, this raises the question of how the members should be grouped or selected, which can be realised in a number of ways. First, members can be grouped according to their seniority – this can be observed, for instance, within the Austrian association, *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Forschung und Entwicklung im Bildungswesen* (OEFEB), which has a separate section for emerging researchers. Similarly, early career researchers can meet within a conference section, as is common at a number of conferences, including the European Conferences on Educational Research (ECER). Second, membership may be restricted only to selected members who are active within a given field or who have achieved high recognition in their field, which is reflected, for instance, in the conditions for entering the Learned Society of the Czech Republic, which only allows distinguished scholars to enter. Third, members can be grouped, formally or informally, in various thematic sections or networks – for instance, the abstracts for the European Conferences on Education Research (ECER) are submitted to 34 networks, whose meetings and activities the members can also join. It should be pointed out that the first two options are not compatible with the ways the CAPV has been functioning. The third solu-



tion, in the form of thematic networks, has been called for by several members. However, such initiatives have never been transformed into an emergent network, mostly because of the limited number of members' interests in a rather small Czech community. Therefore, whether it is realistic to create thematic networks within a relatively small community of members in a relatively small country remains an open question. In this respect, transdisciplinary collaboration with researchers from other fields could be a way forward. However, the CAPV Statutes emphasise that besides researchers and scholars, CAPV members may also include "other workers in the field of education" (Statutes, 2023), which may include, among others, teachers and students. This suggests that the association's role is to create a platform for the networking of members of various organisations and institutions. This orientation towards networking is realised, for instance, by organising conferences that are attended by diverse audiences, often beyond the CAPV members, or by distributing the CAPV Bulletin.

The tensions as sources of challenges for the CAPV

It goes without saying that maintaining all the directions outlined above results in a complex agenda for the CAPV: a global orientation needs to be maintained alongside a local one; the CAPV members with diverse backgrounds and interests have different needs that the association attempts to meet and, at the

same time, a platform for the diverse community members to network has to be maintained. Excellent science, excellent research requires conditions for its conducting and this also represents a challenge for the possibilities of an NGO based on volunteer work and effort. The CAPV activities are managed by an executive board that has five members. Although we appreciate that CAPV members take part in conferences, contribute to joint publications (e.g. Poláchová Vašátková & Tůma, 2022), or volunteer as reviewers, we have noticed that members may not be as actively engaged in some other initiatives. This, to a certain extent, limits the range of the organisation's activities and their success, and imposes constraints on future developments within the CAPV.

It follows that the sustainability of the CAPV activities can be identified as a major challenge that the association has been facing. It appears that more support would be needed to maintain the current agenda, for instance by means of more active engagement of the members or by expanding or strengthening the management of the association (e.g. in the form of a fully-fledged office and employees). Another approach to addressing this challenge would be to reduce the complex agenda of the association, perhaps by weakening one of the directions that we outlined above. In this respect, it may be necessary to re-define the Statutes or reassess the expectations with respect to the CAPV. Nevertheless, from the perspective of our experience it seems highly important to further stimulate participatory di-



verse as well as inclusive learning dialogue among different stakeholders and create opportunities that promote a culture of

understanding and collaboration across different disciplines and themes in education both locally and globally.

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