



New Challenges for Education in Times of Crisis and Major Societal Change

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The Call for this Special Issue asked whether and how education is responding to the global challenges faced by humanity. The demands on education to prepare people to cope with major challenges such as climate change, migration, war, energy, and the looming food crisis are growing, at the same time as the future becomes less predictable.

The *Pedagogika* journal called for contributions that would provide evidence of both challenges and the changes that are needed, as well as studies that would provide initial insights into how education is responding to these challenges.

We expected a lot of contributions, but contrary to our expectations, the topic did not appeal to a wider range of authors, and only two empirical articles passed the peer review process. One of them is accompanied by a discussion paper that expands on the topic.

The second part of this special issue is a broad discussion panel in which prominent academics, either on their own behalf or on that of the well-known Czech and European scientific societies they represent, comment on the questions stated by the call. The discussion brings interesting ideas and perspectives and thus creates a significant part of the monothematic issue.

We gradually realised that writing scholarly texts about challenges in education is itself challenging. If a situation is a challenge, it usually needs to be responded to, often without prior research and empirical evidence (as was the case, for example,



with the forced transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic). And once there is sufficient research on a phenomenon, we usually no longer describe it as a challenge, but rather as a problem for which research has provided some clues.

The truth is, however, that the capacity of educational research is currently insufficient to ensure that educational systems' responses to global challenges are evidence-based. It seems that it is the capability to work with evidence that we need as an essential part of education – in all processes, at all levels, and pursued by all actors.

The article by Jonathan Firth and Saima Salehje, “Engaging Student Teachers with Evidence: Trainers’ Perspectives of Barriers and Opportunities”, deals with just how to prepare future generations of teachers for promoting evidence-based thinking in schools. The authors report that student teachers find methodology courses difficult, lack confidence, and do not see research competencies as a part of their professional identity. However, the way in which students are introduced to research matters greatly. The authors suggest that trainees are more motivated to engage with research if they see it as a norm and expectation of the job and if engagement is structured in ways that meet their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness

In the discussion of this article, authored by Lucie Jarkovská and entitled “Journaling in Teaching Qualitative Research Methods to Non-sociologists”, the finding that research methodology courses are too complex and difficult for students is questioned. The author describes her experience teaching a research methodology course using journal-based instruction as having been positive. Students report that they can envision evidence-based problem solving in their future careers after this course.

The second study relates to the experience of teaching and studying during the COVID-19 pandemic. Irena Reimannová and Kateřina Keplová investigated student teachers’ perceptions of whether and how their microteaching sessions, conducted online because of the pandemic restrictions, prepared them for their face-to-face placement practice teaching the following semester. Their study, “From Virtual to Physical: Insights into Student English Language Teachers’ Perceptions of Preparedness for Face-to-Face Placement Practice Teaching”, suggests that initial teacher education should promote students’ awareness and the transferability of skills, which can help prepare them mentally for the unknown.

The Discussion Panel consists of seven contributions answering two questions that briefly introduce the theme of this special issue: What do you see as the main challenge(s) for education? and What changes do you expect to see in education as a result of these challenges? The responses follow this line of thought; they range from general to specific perspectives and include an educational research perspective, too.

We believe that the purpose of education should be to empower individuals throughout their lives. We hope that you will find this Special Issue both informative and inspiring in this respect.