
Editorial: On Critical Perspectives in Education

What kind of education do we need today? In times of post-truth, resignation of liberal democracy, and flourishing political populism, the core of education ought to be discussed. What is current education and what could it be? Repeatedly – in the experience of individuals and collectives – education has been a strategy to change the reality, politics and biographies, as it has been a tool to reproduce the society, to sustain the “known patterns”...

Creative and emancipatory potential of education has often been addressed on the pages of books by authors associated with critical education. Observations of the critical educators concern, for instance, political, social, ethnic, gender, and minority rights, and the power of the majority. They describe the reality of the prospects of those less visible, those who are oppressed and excluded. At the same time, they critically point to how the majority operates, along with the mechanisms of governance that belong to them. In such a very unique way of capturing reality, critical educators have shared experience: the dissemination of critical consciousness, learning to ask critical questions, or activating the excluded. Classical authors and books in critical education are quite well known and readily available. However, the potential of critical education should not stall on updating the descriptions of oppression, but ask current and relevant questions about education, trigger discussions on the society, culture, and politics. Therefore this issue of the Journal of the Czech Pedagogical Society can be viewed as an attempt to complement the dimensions of critical education through research perspectives from Central Europe.

Few months ago, when the call for papers for this issue was sent out, it was rather unclear what particular topics will be discussed and which optics will be chosen by the authors to investigate the issues. The abstracts that were received confirmed the richness and heterogeneity of the issues that have been dealt with by critical education. Reflections that are included in the five papers in this volume show the multidimensional reflection on critical educational and the methodological diversity in terms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The articles also show the specifics of the local conditions. We hope that the perspective outlined in this journal will arouse the curiosity of readers, encourage reflection and trigger a discussion on what the role of education in the contemporary world is.

Kateřina Lojdov presents the entanglement of academic freedom in the neoliberal era. The paper does not merely describe the important problem of the role and place of politics in academia. It opens questions about styles of politics in education and academia, the critical approach to educational policy, and also discusses ways how university teachers and students can consciously participate in the processes.

Alena Felcmanov in her paper shows another role of the teacher in the perspective of critical education reflection. Roots of her thinking about teachers are in Freire's pedagogy but her reflection shows contemporary problems, relations and political contexts of educational actions.

Eva Zamojska uses two powerful categories in critical education as a frame for her reflection: equity and difference. In her article, the rather conservative Polish school is seen as a battlefield for an ideological fight; for a fight about dignity, equality and a possibility to be different in a system that does not respect differences.

In their empirical study, Andrea Preissov Krej and her colleagues challenge the transmission of stereotypes and prejudices in education through examining the value orientation of Czech teachers. They highlight the idea that emphasizing the development of cognitive dimensions of teachers' attitude can also lead to a rather stereotypical mindset of students.

Hana Packov and Michal Jeřek contribute to this volume with a students' sociological input and explore the context of formal education in different countries and cultures. In their text, they investigate parents' expectations and involvement in education of their children based on gender stereotypes rooted in a particular system.

Dear Readers, we hope that the articles in this issue will provide a different outlook on the work of teachers and on the functioning of education systems. The texts, despite being very different, share a common trait – opposition to oppressive reality and highlighting the emotional aspect of education. As long as this kind of sensitivity exists, we can hope that education is a critical tool of emancipation. We wish you critical reading.

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