

The Future of Educational Research: Looking Through the Lenses of Metamodernism

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Abstract

In today's complex and unsettling global landscape, it is crucial to seek, define, and legitimize educational perspectives and research that are underpinned by philosophical paradigms that enable us to respond to unforeseen challenges and effectively address the ever-growing complexity and multiplicity of reality. The evolving nature of education – in particular – underscores the urgent need for a paradigm shift. Education itself is in crisis, dominated by unsustainable approaches and narrowly conceived solutions. The main objectives of this study are to provide a summary of the metamodernist paradigm as introduced in previous works and to conceptualize the newly established interdisciplinary principles of metamodernism for the current and future educational research. The theoretical discussion in this paper adopts a constructivist-based integral eclecticism as its methodological framework. Following a concise introduction to metamodernism as an emerging cultural paradigm, the main body of the paper examines the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological dimensions of research through a metamodernist lens. These four aspects of educational research are then contextualized within a broader interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to educational sciences, emphasizing their relevance to social practice. The paper concludes with a brief discussion on the practical implications of the concepts and conclusions presented.

Keywords: Axiology, epistemology, educational research, educational sciences, future, metamodernism, methodology, ontology.

Introduction

We live in “disturbing times, mixed up times, troubling and turbid times”, but we are invited by Donna Haraway to stay with trouble and to avoid being tempted to address trouble by simply imagining a safe future. Instead, we are encouraged to “learn to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic past and apocalyptic or salvic futures” (Haraway, 2016, p. 1). A deeper awareness of our troubled present is essential before we can even consider the future and any course of action.

It has become customary to begin theoretical papers in the social sciences – regardless of the topic – by highlighting the urgency of our global situation. This often involves referencing significant turning points (e.g., 9/11, the Great Recession of 2007–2009, COVID-19, the Russian–Ukrainian war), global challenges (such as climate change, global economic inequality, political polarization, and artificial intelligence), or broader meta-crises (including the crises of meaning, mental health, techno-environmental issues, and digital transformation). Think tanks and eminent scholars have even coined various abbreviations (e.g., VUCA, BANI, RUPT, and TUNA) to encapsulate the complexities of these troubled times. For instance, BANI, introduced in 2020 by Jamais Cascio, stands for Brittleness, Anxiety, Non-linearity, and Incomprehensibility, describing the convoluted and precarious state of global affairs (Cascio, 2020).

When examining the current state of the modern world, it is clear that what is needed, first and foremost, is a deeper understanding of “the trouble” we face. Secondly, we must build the capacity to develop an education system that can cope with the uncertainties, turbulence, complexities, paradoxes, and anxiety-inducing conditions of our predicament. A profound shift in perspective is needed, one that education – if fundamentally reimagined – has the power to facilitate. In our evolving global context, it is essential to seek, define, and legitimize educational views and research approaches that are grounded in appropriate philosophical paradigms. The realities of education, as reflected by the authors of this article and numerous studies, point to the need for a paradigm shift. Education itself is in crisis, dominated by unsustainable approaches and solutions (Blumenstyck, 2015; Heffernan et al., 2022; Iliško et al., 2014; Maragakis et al., 2016; Cella & Restaino, 2012). To address these challenges, we need educators who not only understand this turbulent world but can also adapt and thrive within it. These educators must critically engage with and realize educational goals that respond to the current global conditions and future challenges (Iliško, 2007; Salīte et al., 2021). Current crises demand a new conceptualization of humanity, society and their capacity for change and this needs to be mirrored in the reframing of educational research – as one of driving key forces for change in education – in ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological terms.

Metamodernism, conceived as a new phase in cultural evolution, exists at a meta-level that encompasses and transcends previous phases. This framework, above all, emphasizes the necessary oscillation between the modernist pursuit of meaning and the postmodern scepticism towards the very existence of meaning. Educational research, aligned with the principles of metamodernism, must reflect the inherent complexity and ambiguity of reality. Linear and binary approaches fall short in addressing such complexity. The interplay of the core dimensions of research – ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology – cannot be reduced to straightforward connections; instead, it requires multiplicity and multi-directionality. Being, in the context of contemporary reality, is multiple, unstable, and rarely clear-cut, meaning that ontology cannot be represented as singularity. Similarly, epistemology must draw upon diverse and intersecting ways of knowing, best achieved through transdisciplinarity.

According to Gigliotti (2020), metamodernism embraces togetherness and rejects arbitrary dominator hierarchies, which characterize the modern epoch. Therefore, guided by Clarke and Parsons (2013), we view educational research within the context of metamodernity as an effort to move beyond constructed binaries. This approach reframes and reconceptualizes categories that have become too entrenched ideologies of representation and objectification, opening up research to explore where it may naturally lead (Clarke & Parsons, 2013, p. 38). A rhizomatic perspective on research is essential for breaking down binary associations while simultaneously embracing multiplicity and complexity. Unlike arborescent root systems, research core dimensions resemble “taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3). This rhizomatic structure allows educational research to explore unprecedented assemblages as they emerge, exposing and overcoming restrictive binary interpretations that may hinder the envisioning of future possibilities. Nomadic thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) grants metamodern educational researchers the freedom to explore ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological interconnections in fluid yet comprehensive terms.

Therefore – given the need for flexibility, multiperspectivity, and multidirectionality – it appears fitting for expert generalists to be at the forefront of this educational research vision, as their distinctive aptitude lies in integrating diverse perspectives, and their key attributes include cognitive insight and flexibility: the ability to apply knowledge practically, having sufficient expertise in one area to appreciate different forms of comprehension, and knowing how to merge them while maintaining a sense of curiosity toward the unfamiliar. It seems equally imperative for education to aspire to produce graduates (at least a portion of them) who are inclined to adopt the role of expert generalists in both their personal and professional lives, thus essentially reviving the concept

of Renaissance men and women (Melero & Palomeras, 2015; Stone, 2022). To begin with, expert generalists, with their ability to simultaneously address both practical and abstract challenges, can provide valuable insights across all levels of educational deliberation, from discussions among educational philosophers and policymakers to those involving university educators, teacher trainers, and school instructors.

Perspectiva, a group of expert generalists dedicated to enhancing the connections between systems, individuals, and society, has proposed ten principles (Biddlecome & Rowson, 2023) outlining both collective and personal reconsiderations of the evolving world and how we should respond to these changes. One of the premises within this set focuses on education, emphasizing the need for a new framework of education that addresses the curriculum relevant to our current era. This reimaged educational approach is intended to help confront the challenges related to:

1. Significance (What truly matters in life and how can we unite around it?);
2. Comprehensibility (What is happening and how do we comprehend it?);
3. Capability (Do we possess the necessary skills to accomplish what needs to be done?);
4. Legitimacy (Who has the authority to determine how society evolves and on what grounds?);
5. Imagination (What does a path towards a desirable world look and feel like?).

Our position as authors of this theoretical discussion stems from our long experience and disciplinary links with education, teacher education, and educational research, as well as our interdisciplinary orientation and scientific interests in philosophy (philosophy of science, philosophy of education), psychology (educational psychology, health psychology), sustainability issues, research methodology, etc. Our own interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (Pipere & Lorenzi, 2021) focus on these disciplines and topics helps us experiment with holistic, dynamic, and inclusive approaches to research and problem-solving that are required in a metamodern perspective. This new perspective of metamodernism has already been discussed in science in general (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2023), in social sciences (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022), and now in this article we will narrow down the focus of our thinking exercise on educational research as one of the key forces driving changes and reframing in education. The methodological approach we have chosen for this theoretical discussion is constructivism-based integral eclecticism (Tellings, 2001). Eclecticism in philosophy has three valuable characteristics for our purpose: 1) a non-dogmatic engagement with various philosophical schools and traditions;

2) an acknowledgement of the significance of the history of philosophy; and 3) an appreciation of the necessity of a liberal pluralistic attitude towards philosophical investigation (Kidd, 2010). Looking at the field of educational research, integral eclecticism can be conducive to integrating various theories that address either different fields or different aspects within a specific field, thus providing a more complete picture of a variety of situations (Tellings, 2001).

Arising from the above discussion, the article provides an insight on the potential of metamodernism as a philosophical framework to re-orient educational research. The main objectives of this theoretical study are to provide a summary of the metamodern paradigm as introduced in previous works (Mārtinsone & Pipere, 2021; Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022) and to conceptualize the newly established interdisciplinary principles of metamodernism (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022) for the current and future education and educational research. A specific focus on the above-mentioned authors and papers is justified by the scarcity of other theoretical or conceptual works that address science and research through the lens of metamodernism with a comparable level of depth and rigor.

While previous articles have introduced and provided the elaboration of the principles of metamodernism (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022, 2023) in science in general and in social sciences, this presentation offers a more comprehensive and contextualized elaboration of these principles, establishing the perspective on educational research in the 21st century. Thus, the unique contribution of this article lies in the application of the principles of metamodernism to influence the landscape of educational research.

The ensuing discussion will begin by briefly providing a concise explanation of metamodernism as a novel cultural code. The main body of the paper will aim to: 1) situate the ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological dimensions of research within the perspective of metamodernism and 2) examine these four key aspects of future of educational research through a general view of educational sciences, interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspective, and an angle of social practice. The article will conclude with a discussion of practical implications and conclusions drawn from the subject matter.

Foundations of Metamodernism

Meta-crises mentioned in the introduction of this article reflect the current state of the world and humanity, encompassing our systems, values and society. However, to effectively analyze and address these crises, we need a broader philosophical perspective that captures life between worlds. This perspective should provide a foundation from which to depart and a lens through which to examine our subject of inquiry. In this section, we will briefly describe the cultural

code and paradigm of metamodernism. This topic is explained in greater detail in other works (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022, 2023). Our aim here is to summarize the basic philosophical background of metamodernism, which will be further applied in the next section.

From a philosophical standpoint, it is essential to first step back and adopt a comprehensive perspective on the world, humanity, and individuals as we enter the 21st century. We can reflect both on the successive development and current cohabitation of stages of cultural evolution (indigenous, premodern, modernist, and postmodern stages), which implicitly and explicitly have brought us to our current situation. The dramatic and complex situation of the current world is a fertile ground for the birth of metamodernism. It is important to pin down from the start that metamodernism combines modernist faith in progress with a postmodern critical point of view (Metamoderna, 2022). Such combinations result in a perspective on reality denoted by a long, complex, and paradoxical path of development oscillating between larger complexity and sophisticated simplicity, and nevertheless characterized by existential depth. The formal beginnings of metamodernism could be traced to the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, although some scholars posit that this movement entirely belongs to the 21st century. However, metamodernism, as it is understood today, was first established in the foundational theory of Dutch philosophers and cultural theorists Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010).

The current global situation is undeniably complex and dramatic, thus requiring the new philosophical conceptualization of the world. Over the past two decades, humanity has been on the edge of at least 2–3 apocalyptic events, which have led to the emergence of a generalized sense of hopelessness (Baciu et al., 2016) and doomsday scenarios, which persist in the global imaginary. Reflexive modernism (Baxter, 2020; Beck, 2009; Giddens, 1994, 1998) and postmodernism (Derrida, 1992; Foucault, 1990, 1995; Lyotard, 1984; Wittgenstein, 2009) as contemporary philosophical paradigms (e.g., D'Andrade, 1995; Roseneau, 1993; Sahlins, 1993; Spiro, 1996), offer a weak conceptual response to the crises and are deficient in terms of providing humanity with a road map or at least a viable scenario for the upcoming future.

Zooming in on the critique of previous paradigms, one reason for the transition from modernism to postmodernism and other modernized alternatives, such as reflexive and liquid modernism, was the belief that modernism failed to fulfil its promises. These promises, among others, included mastery over nature, the omnipotence of science, universal freedom, linear progress, and a utopian future filled with happiness. Instead, it became apparent that these promises turned into their opposites, or achieving them seemed like a distant possibility (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022).

In turn, one of the answers to why postmodernism was defeated suggests that

relying on selective, individual cognition and experiences does not provide the opportunity to construct a holistic view of the world (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022). The focus of postmodernism on subjective truths and relativism weakens belief in objective facts, making consensus on issues like science and morality difficult (D'Andrade, 1995). Postmodernism's rejection of grand narratives can lead to cultural fragmentation and nihilism, eroding shared values and social cohesion (McKinley, 2000). Challenges of postmodernism with regard to objective truth and authority may undermine clarity on ethical issues, which are so important to deal with the challenges of sustainability, digitalization, artificial intelligence, etc.

Although currently metamodernism has been conceived as a developmental stage of society, an abstracted metameme, a stage of personal development, a movement with a certain project for culture and society (Freinacht, 2021), emerging structure of feeling, and a new *Zeitgeist* (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010), in this paper we describe metamodernism both as a next stage of cultural evolution (see above) and as a new philosophical paradigm (Clasquin-Johnson, 2017; Cooper, 2017). By viewing metamodernism as a new stage of cultural evolution situated at a meta-level above all previous phases, we also emphasize the necessary oscillation between the modernist passionate search for meaning and the postmodern casting of doubts on the existence of any meaning at all.

Metamodernism supports the idea that trust, sincerity, dialogue, and faith can overcome the irony and detachment of postmodernism. While modernism focused on epistemology (the nature of knowledge) and postmodernism on ontology (the nature of existence), metamodernism challenges the universality and truthfulness of traditional modernism and the fragmentation and doubts of postmodernism. Metamodernism seeks to alleviate the sense of disconnection associated with postmodernism so as to return to the sense of wholeness, in this way fostering local and global positive changes (Yousef, 2017).

In the next section we will articulate the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological principles of metamodernism for the research and specifically in relation to educational research.

Research in Educational Sciences Through the Lenses of Metamodernism

Building on the preceding sections, we will analyze research in educational sciences through the lens of metamodernism as conceptualized for social sciences (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2023).

We will begin by introducing the four core dimensions of research – ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. This introduction will include a general description of each dimension and a brief presentation of the corresponding philosophical principles of metamodernism. Drawing primarily on earlier

papers by Pipere and Mārtinsone (2022, 2023), this analysis will elucidate how metamodernism can contribute to the development of potential frameworks and conceptualizations. This analysis will be followed by the interpretation of the four key aspects of educational research – ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological – through three perspectives: specific disciplinary (educational sciences) perspective, interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspective, and social practice.

First, we should mention one peculiar principle which applies to all dimensions of research through the perspective of metamodernism. The principle of intersecting coexistence of previous cultural codes (indigenous, premodern, but, especially, modern and postmodern) can be described as the first comprehensive metamodernism principle. This principle does not pertain to a single dimension of research, but connects them all and is applied as a transversal approach to all phenomena that are considered through the lenses of metamodernism. This principle of coexistence of previous stages of cultural evolution in metamodernism shows our need to move away from seeing various codes in a sequential fashion and instead recognize that each code permeates and interacts with previous ones in either antithetical or integrative fashion. This integration of modernism and postmodernism is particularly evident in every dimension of metamodern philosophy. This principle is one of the main features for discerning the approach of metamodernism in describing and studying any phenomenon or object. Also, this transversal principle can be applied dealing with challenges related to significance, comprehensibility, capability, legitimacy, and imagination, mentioned above. For instance, the answer to the question “What truly matters in life?” in the content aspect of the educational research (for instance, in wide terms of curriculum research) can be searched for integrating indigenous (mastering rituals, traditions, outdoors, gathering), premodern (value formation, reading, storytelling), modern (facts, knowledge, experiments, demonstrations) and postmodern (discussions, arguments, self-reflection, critical worldview) cultural codes. Now, we will explore the dimensions of research – ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology – through the lens of metamodernist principles.

Dimensions of Research Through the Perspective of Metamodernism

Ontology. The ontological dimension of research is derived from the philosophical study of being, focusing on the nature of existence and reality (Crotty, 1998). To put it in simpler terms, ontology addresses two main points: 1) what exists, essentially defining the constituents of reality, and 2) the most general features and relationships among these entities (Hofweber, 2023). The principle of metamodernism when related to ontology highlights the paradoxical

but holistic simultaneity caused by oscillations. The main concepts related to this principle are metaxis (oscillation), simultaneity, pluralism, and ontological paradox. Meta- represents an oscillation, a swinging or swaying with and between future, present, and past, here and there and somewhere, with and between ideals, mindsets, and positions (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010). Metaxis refers to oscillation (processes and relationships) between two or more entities. A metastatic understanding of reality in both temporal and spatial terms is implicit in the metamodern ontology and also epistemology as the latter is traditionally grounded on or interconnected with ontological premises (Grix, 2002; Hay, 2007).

Metaxis in its original philosophical meaning “involves a position between two opposites from a middle point, but also involves an assimilation of both at the same time” (Andres Mora, 2023). It is a human condition of in-betweenness, whereby humans find themselves suspended between polarities. Its metamodern conceptualization allows considering opposing realities, the universal and the particular while also allowing one to retain the specificity of contexts even if considered in their interplay with others. Playing with such duality enables one to explore interconnections, and interplay of multiple realities but also of multiple perspectives.

Ontological pluralism (or pluralism about being) posits that there are different ways, kinds and modes of being as well as there are different beings (Hashemi & Hosseini, 2023). Within this perspective, a direct connection between something's existence and its essence is established: there is a relationship between what kind of being something has and the particular sort of thing that it is (Bernstein & Goldschmidt, 2021). In a metamodern manner, one (both living, material and abstract objects) can oscillate between these different ways, kinds and modes of being even between existence and non-existence (Bernstein & Goldschmidt, 2021).

The ontological paradox of metamodernism can be illustrated by the paradoxical oscillation between and within the different dimensions that determines that simultaneity can occur not only between modernism and postmodernism, but also between physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the world. The intersection of metamodernism and ontology in social sciences leads to the emergence of a participatory worldview – as a potential framework that can be developed and applied in various spheres of life related to this principle. This worldview is systemic, holistic, and rational, suggesting that the reality we experience is a co-creation of the cosmos and human perception. It is a participation as a relationship of giving and taking in any sphere of life, a relationship between everything that exists in space (Wagle, 2022).

In light of the global challenges outlined in the introduction, a metamodern ontology is likely to be associated with questions of apprehension (What is

happening?) and imagination (What does a path toward a desirable world look and feel like?). This is because such ontology deals not only with what exists and but also with what does not yet exist, thus encompassing both our current reality and the reality we project or imagine for the future.

Epistemology. The epistemological dimension of research stems from the branch of philosophy that focuses on understanding the nature, origins, and limits of human knowledge. It concerns the mind's relation to reality, exploring questions such as: What does it mean for this relation to constitute knowledge? Do we truly know things? If so, how and when do we attain this knowledge? (Martinich & Stroll, 2024). The first principle of epistemology in metamodernism is the paradoxical awareness of truth and grand narratives.

The first epistemological principle could be metaphorically called Protean awareness of truth, since metamodernism denies the metaphysics of the subject-object and emphasizes the contextual nature of understanding the world. Proteus was a Greek sea god who could tell the future, but when he was asked a question he did not want to answer, he would change shape (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2023). One of the main concepts related to this principle is the binary subjective/objective truth: subjective truth is based on how an individual experiences the world and is personal to the individual, while objective truth relates to facts that are existent and define reality irrespective of a person's beliefs or opinions (Klein, 2023).

Grand narratives are broad, overarching stories that attempt to provide a comprehensive and unified view of reality and to explain the meaning and purpose of human life (Philo-Notes, 2022), for example, Christianity, Enlightenment, Democracy. Certain ideas can be objectively (locally) true for a particular individual, but not universally true at the level of society – this requires simultaneous understanding and acceptance of both individual activities and their differences from other people's actions. Thus, truth can be both subjective and objective at the same time. However, it also accommodates non-binary relationships of truth, i.e., it is sensitive at once to the particular and the universal and it allows exploring both at once. Speaking about big narratives, metamodernism itself is not the big narrative and does not require the obligatory existence of the big narratives. However, it creates space for faith in the great narratives (Abramson, 2017).

According to the global challenges, the first principle of epistemology of metamodernism is probably having the closest association with the questions of comprehensibility (How do we comprehend what is happening?) as it is related to the understanding of the world, legitimacy (who has the authority to determine how society evolves and on what groups?) that connects us with the determination of truth in material and social world and imagination as it pertains to the proper choice and attitude toward grand narratives of future.

The second principle of epistemology of metamodernism revolves around the transversal concept of metaxis-based thinking and dialogue, encompassing both dia- and polilogue. This principle not only includes relevant concepts within epistemology but also permeates metamodernistic research ontologically.

As discussed earlier, metamodernistic thinking (both in everyday life and in science) entails an oscillation between poles, thus denoting a continuous change of positions, rather than the static (antithetical to the liquidity and fluidity of different modernisms) balance between the two dichotomous or dual choices. In such a to and fro, the two (or more) poles are preserved even if not always perceived as equal. Any of these poles can be prioritized at different times and contexts. If postmodernism supported dialectical thinking, metamodernism supports dialogical thinking by recommending a middle ground or means of conversation between different positions, since overlapping opposing views can lead to effective collective action in solving problems.

In metamodernistic dialogue diverse logics, voices, and existences that go beyond the bounds of dialogue in traditional terms emerge, thus allowing contradictions to emerge but not necessarily resolved by flattening difference. Inquiry based on this principle can be featured as participatory inquiry suitable to frame research at the level of individual, social group/institution/organization or entire society.

Epistemic pluralism recognizes the value of pursuing different methodologies in describing the world, multiple theories to explain a given phenomenon across and within levels of explanation and, in doing so, utilizing a plurality of appropriate conceptual (i.e., definitional, classificatory, etc.) approaches tailored to the specificities of each investigation (Wegerhoff et al., 2021). One of the forms of epistemic pluralism is dualism that ties back into the metamodernist oscillation.

In light of global challenges, the second principle of epistemology in metamodernism is closely related to questions of capability (Do we possess the necessary skills to accomplish what needs to be done?) and legitimacy (Who should take the lead?). This principle addresses whether we possess the necessary skills to accomplish our goals, emphasizing thinking and communication skills. It also explores legitimacy by determining who, if anyone, holds authority in the dia/polilogue and why.

Axiology. In philosophical terms, axiology is equivalent to a narrow conceptualization of the Theory of Value. "Axiology can be thought of as primarily concerned with classifying what things are good, and how good they are. For instance, a traditional question of axiology concerns whether the objects of value are subjective psychological states, or objective states of the world" (Schroeder, 2021, par. 1). If we consider the philosophical principle of metamodernism in terms of axiology, the interplay of rhizomatic and hierarchical social relationships

and values aims to produce a framework for sensible living. Embedded in this interplay are the metaphors of rhizome (rhizomatic social relationships and values) and trees (hierarchical social relationships and values). If the hierarchical pyramids (trees) primarily mirror the evidence of material and abstract objects with strictly hierarchical structures, the metaphor of network or rhizome is grounded in postmodernist thinking and underpins many up-to-date complex, network-based and non-linear processes and phenomena (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2023). The axiological dimension comes to the fore with metamodernism unlike in modernism, where epistemology prevails, and postmodernism which emphasizes the primacy of ontology. Metamodern axiology envisions the continuous conversation between rhizomatic social relations and values (collective collaboration and determination of values in open and heterogeneous networks), on the one hand, and traditional hierarchical structures and value systems of society, on the other. This principle is reflected in metamodernism by intelligent and authentic living, emphasizing values such as relation to all people and nature, as opposed to (post)modernism, individualism and isolated experience (Dumitrescu, 2016). Axiological plurality, which seeks to understand what is good in people, traditionally encompasses various forms of intrinsic value, such as virtue, knowledge, friendship, and more (Mason, 2018). Value pluralists face the problem of explaining whether or how the different types of value can be compared when making rational decisions, although metamodernism holds to the interplay, not comparison of values.

Given the global challenges, axiology of metamodernism is probably having the closest association with the question of meaning (What truly matters in life and how we unite around it?) as it is related to the individual and social values and legitimacy (Who has the authority to determine how society evolves and on what grounds?) that, among others, touches the question of who decides what is good for individuals and society.

Methodology. Methodological aspect of philosophy focuses on the studies of the methods of inquiry in a particular field. One of the most significant concepts of metamodernism in methodology is pluralism that metaphorically can be described as an opportunity to tell the same story in different ways and from different perspective angles or, aspirationally, to conduct the unrestricted research. Pluralism in methodology takes root in metamodern ontology, epistemology, and axiology in relation to pluralism. Thus, ontological pluralism for methodology (at least in the social sciences) means oscillation between and across different modes of being, for instance, humans in one research can change their being between being of object (measured by instruments) and being of subjects (telling their experience). Epistemological pluralism in methodological discourse means that the results of seemingly the most objective studies should be combined with an awareness of their limitations and complementary nature,

and that new knowledge should be acquired in dia/polylogy with everyone involved in a given problem, thus possibly serving as a form of transdisciplinary research (Miller et al., 2008).

The metaxis serves as a stabilizing factor at both quantitative and qualitative ends of methodological scope. It also depicts mixed method research as a simultaneous situating, where we integrate dialogically and oscillate contextually between quantitative/qualitative reality, inductive/deductive logic, etc.

Axiological pluralism in the metamodern approach to methodology pertains to an ongoing conversation and interplay between the values of society, the researcher and the study participants. As mentioned above, one story can be told in different ways, thus allowing for the whole variety of approaches, forms, means used, methodologies (Chang, 2012; Ramadan, 2010; Mārtinsone, 2011). A good example of the interaction and oscillation of the values of the researcher (or team of researchers), and those of research participants in different contexts and stages of research can be provided by participatory research – coming from the social movements and civil society organizations, not the academic world (Hall & Tandon, 2017). Participatory research, getting currently more popular in academia, also can be based on a dialogue between cultures (e.g., Sarmiento et al., 2020), a civic dialogue in communities (e.g., Cumming & Norwood, 2012), a dialogue between disciplines (e.g., Kuehl et al., 2020) or between “academic” and “community” researchers (Gormley, 2003). The important point to attain in all these dialogical relationships is the difference in a dialogue, which can be seen as a prerequisite for the mutual influence of dialogical entities. The moment of metamodern metaxis or in-betweenness in this context almost 50 years ago was elegantly captured in Gadamer’s (1980) “fusion of horizons of understanding” as a fleeting moment of encounter with rather oscillatory, not static nature.

In the next section of the article we will provide more detailed information in relation to the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology in metamodernism focusing on educational research.

Philosophical Aspects of Metamodernism in Educational Research

Here we will examine the four key aspects of educational research – ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological – through various dimensions: a general view of specific discipline (educational sciences), an interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspective, and an angle of social practice. A monodisciplinary approach to educational sciences reveals the unique characteristics of the discipline within a metamodernist discourse. However, an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary perspective embraces the optimistic belief that answers to the challenging questions of significance, capability, legitimacy, and imagination (Biddlecome & Rowson, 2023) can be found through collaboration and diversity.

Table 1
Philosophical Aspects of Metamodernism in Educational Research

Dimensions of research	Philosophical aspects of metamodernism			
	Ontology	Epistemology	Axiology	Methodology
The general perspective of research	The concept of MMR integrates two conflicting realities: (post) positivist QUAN reality and postmodernist QUAL reality, which are both considered appropriate for educational research problem-solving.	MM sensibility arises from the dialogue between QUAN and QUAL methods of data collection and analysis within a framework of MMR. This orientation accommodates changeable causal links that are difficult to identify in educational research.	MM asks for interaction and emphasis on the values of the researcher/s and research participants depending on the context of educational research. It is no longer axiologically neutral but rather axiologically dependent and value-sensitive research.	In MM, juxtaposition (placing together different things with different meanings) is represented in MMR and various types of triangulation.
Inter-/transdisciplinary perspective	The polylogue (oscillation) between objective, quantitative, positivism-oriented, generalizing subdisciplines/ research approaches and subjective, qualitative, postmodernism-oriented soft data approaches within educational research.	The polylogue between scientific knowledge, non-academic partners and generalized, as well as contextual knowledge, and oscillation between different types (scientific, artistic, fictional, spiritual, indigenous, traditional, etc.) and sources of knowledge (intuition, experience, thinking, imagination, emotional sensitivity, bodily knowledge, etc.).	Discussions and solutions related to the diversity of values, coordination of interests of educational scientists and community, and attempts to endorse multidimensional reality. Both the research participants and social stakeholders (partners of the research team) with experience in research problems can typically offer awareness, knowledge, or at least hypotheses regarding the possible solutions to intricate education-related problems.	At this level, MM demonstrates its principle of collaboration (especially in participatory research), encouraging joining efforts, perspectives, ideas, and thoughts to instigate collaborative work and collective activities among various scientific disciplines (educational sciences among them) and groups of stakeholders, different methodologies, and specific research.
Educational sciences as social practice	MMR emphasizes a turbulent yet detectable reality and worldview, based on educational reality, pursuing benefits for all community members and individual well-being.	The MM scholars admit that humanity lives in a complex world, demanding for educational sciences to foster a specific way of thinking and global awareness to deal with the meta-crises of the present world.	The most important aspect of educational research is to produce practical outcomes that promote social justice and focus on socially oriented goals.	When planning and implementing educational research design, it should be based on the best way to answer research questions. The theories, programs, or activities that have proven their practical utility for a specific group of people should be considered the most suitable.

Notes: MM – metamodernism, MMR – mixed method research, QUAL – qualitative research, QUAN – quantitative research.

Viewing educational research through the lens of social practice (Begg, 2019) shifts its focus toward the goal of coping with both global and local challenges while simultaneously striving to enhance the well-being and happiness of every member of society. The controversial, expansive, and ever-changing term of sustainability (Hamilton-Burge, 2019) easily bridges both sides of just mentioned social practice, if we accept that sustainability is about making the world a better place by improving the relationships we have with and within it (Robertson, 2023; Sykes, 2023).

The examination presented here can be viewed as an extension of previously suggested metamodern elaboration for social sciences (Pipere & Mārtinsone, 2022). The general content areas, processes and functions specifically related to educational research will be summarized and framed according to different perspectives (see Table 1).

Practical Implications and Conclusions

The unmet promises of modernism, combined with the paralysis induced by postmodernism, have left a challenging void regarding contemporary ethical issues critical for addressing sustainability, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and other pressing global challenges. Arising from the limitations of these previous paradigms, metamodernism offers an alternative framework that provides a comprehensive perspective on the world – one that avoids dogmatism and universalism.

Yousef (2017) contends that metamodernism serves as an inclusive framework that fluidly synthesizes the strengths of both modernism and postmodernism. Likewise, Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010) describe metamodernism as an “emerging structure of feeling”, marked by an oscillating sensibility that bridges the irony of postmodernism with the meaning-making orientation of modernism. This sensibility fosters a dynamic interplay between the old and the new, which is essential for tackling the complex, “wicked” problems of our increasingly intricate world (Churchman, 1967).

The resistance to restrictive and predictable binaries in educational research supports a more comprehensive ontology, one that embraces multiplicity and complexity without succumbing to despair or hopelessness. Grounded in an axiology of cooperation and dialogue, this approach fosters a balanced perspective, avoiding negative and stagnant thinking. It enables researchers to sustain a hopeful yet realistic outlook, grounded in the current global context, as they envision possible futures. Epistemologically, metamodernist research calls

for a contextualized understanding of the world that can accommodate both subjective and objective knowledge. Consequently, metamodernism in research is best served by a transdisciplinary approach, which relies on the principle of multiperspectivity. Methodologically, this multiperspectivity is most effectively addressed through mixed methods research, which combines subjective and objective perspectives, as well as qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In recent years, educational research and practice have been heavily shaped by neoliberal ideals, leading to the crystallization and standardization of methods and practices. This has posed a significant challenge for educational researchers: the necessity to move beyond the stagnation of conventional education and “establish pedagogies capable of tackling wicked problems” (Bowman et al., 2024, p. 1369). Fergnani and Cooper (2023) suggest that, while metamodernism as a novel conceptual framework has largely developed within specific academic circles, yet its greatest potential for impact lies in its application to action-oriented research fields. By integrating metamodernist principles, educational research can be propelled beyond its current stagnation, fostering transformative approaches to contemporary challenges. The metamodern approach to research seeks to navigate the oscillation between modernism and postmodernism, balancing opposites such as singularity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, global and local, whole and part, standardization and flexibility, simplicity and complexity, and construction and deconstruction. To truly innovate, educational research must move beyond the dominance of analytical rationality, which often embodies objectivity and detachment. Instead, it should embrace what Bowman et al. (2024, p. 1367) describe as “creative rationality” characterized by open thought that fosters new connections and the ability to deal with the unexpected.

Piro (2018) posits that integral education offers a metamodern response to the inherent complexities, multiplicities, and dualities within the educational sphere. Rather than adhering to traditional problem-solving paradigms, integral education aspires to navigate and manage complexity (Johnson, 1992). Piro underscores that “polarities, or opposing values, are not necessarily problems but can be managed in continuous processes that avoid the either/or choices typical of problem-solving” (Piro, 2018, p. 2466). This perspective stands in contrast to the views of Kilicoglu and Kilicoglu (2020), who advocate for the simplification of complexity as a necessary step for a metamodern and reconstructivist stance in education. Piro (2018), however, argues that complexity itself holds intrinsic value and puts forward a concept of integral education, as education that seeks to retain and appreciate this complexity, rather than simply reducing it to modern terms or distancing from it in postmodern terms.

Within this perspective, educational research can serve as a catalyst for meaning-making, guiding individuals through the uncertainty, chaos, and

ambiguity of crisis-like situations, while simultaneously offering an interpretative lens through which such crises can be better understood (Gigliotti, 2020, p. 570). A more holistic meaning-making process may shift the focus beyond mere knowledge and understanding toward fostering agency and competence through pedagogies that emphasize an engaged, “whole person” approach and transformative learning experiences (Ryan & Tilbury, 2013, p. 5). Additionally, this approach may expand consciousness beyond the self, allowing for an appreciation of whole-part relations while simultaneously valuing both global and local perspectives (Kilicoglu & Kilicoglu, 2020). Finally, a metamodern orientation in educational research may be translated into educational practices that resist the dominance of neoliberal tendencies, instead supporting relational pedagogies centered on interconnectedness and global responsibility.

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