DOI: 10.2478/dcse-2022-0001

sciendo

Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education,
vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–4, 2022

Editorial

Overcoming Disruptions Caused by the Pandemic: Purposeful Leading to a More Sustainable World

The collection of papers in this volume of the journal was compiled during the second wave of Covid pandemic and includes the perspectives of the authors from diverse geographical locations, like Germany, Indonesia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Jamaica. Covid-19 pandemic was the largest of the disruptions of education ever in the history. An unpresented disruption caused closures of schools and universities, and created economic laydown for at least two years. At the same time the pandemic present an opportunity to reimagine and to revitalize education by bridging a digital divide, redesigning a curriculum, and equipping the learners with skills that are necessary to survive in a rapidly changing world.

Building a new normal is a huge leap towards quality education and implementation of sustainable developmental goals. To deal better with the new situation, schools and universities need to strengthen the resilience of educational systems by focusing on inclusion, equity and risk management.

The articles of this volume are focusing on diverse aspects of sustainability in education related to professional development of teachers, education for sustainable development in Spain, developing new educational research instruments, challenges of implementing distance education, assessment of the graduates' employability skills, as well as students' knowledge and skills.

The paper by Juan Casanova Correa and colleagues discusses issues related to Education for sustainability in Campo de Gibraltar (Spain). In order to slow down and reverse climate change, all the actors who have the tools in their hands to do so are necessary. Regenerative farmers and livestock breeders use technology generated by nature. This technology uses herbivores to sequester carbon in soil, and encourages local biodiversity. However, the widespread use of industrialised food production practices has pushed natural technology into the background to focus on human technology, replacing biological processes established for millions of years with chemical ones. This article describes an educational experience in the agriculture sector in a region at risk of desertification: Campo de Gibraltar (Spain). This experience was characterised by three guidelines: listening to food producers in their own environment, recognising their discourse as empowering, and spreading it along with the discourses of other actors in the sector. Education for sustainability is a powerful tool to bring about changes in food production practices.

The study by Abdurrahman Ilgana, Osman Aktan and Servet Üztemur aims to investigate in which areas teachers need Professional Development Activities (PDAs),

the barriers that prevent teachers from participating in PDAs, their frequency of participating in collegiality-based PDAs, and the relationship between their views about the effectiveness of PDAs and their professional commitment. Considering the positive effects of effective PDAs on learning outputs, this large-scale study is expected to contribute to the relevant literature by describing in detail the PDAs that teachers participated in and by explaining the relationship of PDAs with various variables. Research results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected teachers' participation in PDAs and their professional development. It was found that teachers' gender, their marital status, the level of the schools where they worked, their teaching specialty, and their educational background had no effect on their level of need for PDAs. It was found that male teachers had a higher level of perception of barriers than female teachers and married teachers than single teachers. Due to the widespread use of online education at all school levels with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is recommended to develop PDAs for teachers to use information technologies effectively in teaching processes.

The study conducted by Ediyanto Ediyanto, Asep Sunandar, Risa Safira Ramadhani, Thalsa Syahda Aqilah investigates various developments of educational research instruments and to promote new development methods related to development research instruments. Based on the literature study, eight articles discussed the development of educational research instruments. The results indicate four main steps in the development research method: data collection, planning, initial product development, and validation. First, the information-gathering stage shows the research's problem and importance, usually explained in the introduction or background section. The planning stage aims to collect information and materials and prepare the necessary plans to develop the instrument. Then, determining the initial steps of the product is a stage that shows the process and results of initial product development, validation, and revision. Simultaneously, the revision or feedback process should be integrated with each step. Research and development is a cycle, so product development results must be constantly reviewed to stay relevant and solve current problems. Thus, with continuous instrument development, ideas and innovations in education can be realized.

The paper by Ayŗe Ülkü Kan and Erhan Özmen determines the problems experienced by the distance education centre (DEC) personnel in the distance education applications carried out during the pandemic. Phenomenology design and focus group interviews were used in the research. The sample was determined in accordance with the convenience sampling. The study was carried out at a university in Turkey. Eight personnel, three administrative, four academic and one technical, working in different positions at the university's distance education centre were included in the scope of the research. The data were analyzed by content analysis method. As a result of the research, it was determined that the problems experienced by the DEC personnel in this process were grouped in four categories as student-centred, instructor-centred, system-centred and other problems, and solution suggestions were presented within this framework.

Agboola, Bolapeju Mary's article on employers' assessment of graduates' utilization of employable skills: influence on organizational growth and sustainable development in Nigeria was carried out to determine the skills possessed by university graduates for labour market, organizational growth and sustainable development. The study was premised on two theories: Human Capital by Theory Schultz (1975) and Toward a Theory of Motive Acquisition by McClelland (1965). Two instruments; "Employers' Assessment of Graduates' Employability Skills Utilization Questionnaire" and "Sustain-

able Development University Education for Graduates' Skills Acquisition Questionnaire" were administered to 35 employers and 492 graduate employees as respondents. It was concluded that university graduates lack critical skills that could curb youth unemployment, promote safe environment, organizational growth and sustainable development indicators.

The paper by Anne Holfelder reveals teachers' views about ESD. Based on a pluralistic understanding of education for sustainable development (ESD), it is necessary for teachers to reflect on their own opinions and not create pressure to act. Based on this theoretical framework, teachers were interviewed to reconstruct how they deal with this requirement. Three types were identified: The first type conceives ESD as a mission and clearly identifies correct directions for action. The second type acknowledges the tensions and is in a constant reflection loop. The third type views ESD more independently as a renewal of didactics. The article discusses the results in relation to teacher education.

Liliya Makovskaya in her paper discusses the issue of assessment of students' knowledge and skills that have been widely discussed among other educators and scientists as well. Research studies have identified the importance and application of different assessment practices in promoting sustainability in higher education. The present study investigates lecturers' and learners' views on the assessment practices implemented in two higher education institutions situated in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and Daugavpils (Latvia). Their perceptions on providing feedback, variety of assessment tasks, use of peer-evaluation, and facilitation of learning through the assessment activities have been explored. Twenty-one students and thirteen teachers from the Uzbek university and ten students and eight lecturers from the Latvian university participated in the semi-structured interviews. The data were collected either face-to-face or online using the Zoom platform. The comparative analysis revealed participants' similar opinions on the importance of varying assessment assignments and feedback-giving practices.

Geert Franzenburg evaluates documents concerning the Wannsee-conference from a religious psychological perspective in the framework of Holocaust education in Germany. Regarding the emotional regulation strategies of participants (and of Rudolf Hoess) during the conference and during the trials Nuremberg trial 1964, and Eichmann trial Jerusalem 1961, he emphasises their particular coping strategies with (challenging or experienced) emotional suffering. By applying a modified ERQ questionnaire he analyses preventing and suppressing strategies in the intra- and interpersonal, intra- and intercultural mode. Regarding the core-function of responsibility and anti-discrimination in a global situation of increasing distance towards the Holocaust and its uniqueness, he suggests re-and deconstructing such strategies not only in history lessons but in religious education as well – to learn from the past for the future.

The paper by Pinar Erten aims to identify the attitudes and evaluations of the teachers towards distance education which has become compulsory due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the attitudes towards distance education and the evaluations regarding this application and process were taken with an online survey prepared in this context. The authors have reached the teachers with the help of various applications and collected the data. The study was performed under the mixed method. It has been determined that the teachers' attitudes towards distance education were negative. This study also examines how teachers' attitudes towards distance education differ according to various parameters and it was found that only the teachers with previous distance education experience have a positive attitude. Apart from these, the views of the teachers were

also questioned by various means. It was found out that the teachers have both positive and negative attitudes and evaluations, and suggestions were developed in this regard.

From the perspective of a teacher educator and one who works with pre and in-service teachers in Jamaica, Keriffe Clark, in his paper contextualises Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The paper pulls on literature from international scholars, as well as scholars from the Caribbean who have conducted studies in the areas of curriculum, teacher education and ESD. The author argues that efforts to attain sustainable development must be contextually relevant and appropriate. In addition, he posits that teacher education must be properly aligned to curriculum reforms for primary and secondary schools, especially within the context of Small Island Developing states like Jamaica that are unique in their culture, biodiversity, society and economy. The author concedes that there are many implications for curriculum reform to infuse and integrate ESD but proffers, in his estimation, three crucial implications for teacher education.

The paper written by the team of Latvian scholars Lolita Jonāne, Dzintra Iliško, Ilona Fjodorova, and Līga Antoņeviča focuses on the factors that influence the formation of young Latvian people's civic identity and the role of formal education and their teachers in this process in a broader sustainability context. The article reflects the results of a study about Latvian youngsters' involvement in political activities, their attitude and interest about political events in Latvia and the European Union. The authors refer to civic engagement of youth that includes young people working together for both, political and non-political actions to protect values and to make sustainable changes in a community. By becoming a local patriot one starts making connections across cultures, broadens one's horizons and develops a great respect for communities that are very different from their own.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the authors of this volume and reviewers for their contribution in compiling this volume. The variety and care for the topics under research certainly underline the need for focussing on the purposeful overcoming of disruptions, as well as finding new and emerging issues attached to individual research projects. It seems important then to highlight how we identify the causes and subtleties of both considerations. Pointers in each forthcoming research project then could be seen as providing models for deepening acceptance of what Sustainability really means.

Perhaps a widening of the definition of what we mean in the concept of Sustainability will emerge, as we wrestle with the ongoing effects of pandemics, of unfortunate effects of the global industrial age, of global farming on a massive scale with its inevitable loss of plant and animal diversity, of unmasking of the manipulation by some nations focussed only on individual national interests, and of climate change on our planet. The overlaps of one or more of these issues can have deleterious effects, and Education research needs to unmask the negative issues and provide alternative ways of problem-solving.

Of course, much is already in operation, as educationalists and researchers in so many countries address and compare how best to promote Sustainability on a consistent and balanced basis. We are responding, and the confidence to provide a resilient approach is aided by sharing our published results. The variety and completeness of projects published in this edition attests to our forward promotion of Education in 21st century terms.

Berise Heasly, Dzintra Iliško