




## EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES AND ADVANCES IN TIMES OF COVID-19 – Introduction to the special issue

Desafios e Avanços Educacionais em Tempos de COVID-19 –  
Introdução à Edição Especial

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When the first news about an unknown deadly disease in China reached the headlines of the most accessed media on this side of the planet, none of us could imagine to be held hostage to a tiny little thing like a virus for such a long time. Yet, as we reach the anniversary of the first case reported in Wuhan, we are still learning how to manage the multiple tasks and challenges in daily life hoping for the first vaccines to be released in most countries.

During this year many of us had to deal with uncertainty, personal losses, sadness, anxiety, a near to endless list of negative feelings that have and are impacting our relationships in personal life as well as at workplace. Work began to take place at home, which became our 24/7 office when we talk about educators.

Education figures as one of the most impacted sectors still to suffer consequences of this pandemic for many years in the future. Schools and universities were closed earlier than other facilities and, after a short period of hoping for the fast end of the pandemic, the institutions and the education workers were launched to the hard mission of remote teaching. This has been particularly harder for those living in developing countries where basic needs are not fulfilled to most of the population and digital inclusion is even more difficult to deal with.

As a proposal to discuss our ongoing experience as educators during the COVID-19 pandemic, this Special Issue aimed to register our probably most challenging period in recent history. As Editors of this Special Edition, we thank the unimaginable effort of all the contributors that spared their time (our most precious treasure) to

- collect data using online surveys or interviews (by video conference) with students and/or teachers both in higher education and in basic schools,



- review literature on remote learning methodologies or about possible transpositions of active methodologies to the learning from the distance, and
- report their findings to add to our knowledge on new perspectives emerging from their didactic approaches to improve teaching and learning on specific areas like algebraic thinking in early years, computational thinking by educational design, or a combination of virtual tools to evaluate rivers and water streams from an environmental point of view.

Danielle Costa Carrara Couto (Federal University of Pará, Brazil), one of the authors in this Edition, shared her experience with us pointing out:

and

“We understood that there was a need to spread positive messages and to fight the wave of pessimism and evil...”

“During this process, both the students and the teacher found themselves increasingly connected, as media agents with ample capacity to generate and share information, shape opinions and influence society. Reinventing oneself was imperative and technology has made us more human in our messages and content.”

Each received contribution, even those that will not be published showed the ability of educators to change and adapt. Most papers referred to a reinvention of the workplace, of the way to work and of the worker himself or herself.

Also, Luiz Eduardo Macedo de Lacerda (State University of Rio de Janeiro – UERJ) and co-workers shared:

“As teachers at Elementary School II, High School/Technical and Higher Education we dove into the refresher courses to feel able to this new reality, however, attentive to the difficulties and lack of access by the students. The profile of our students points to a group that has limited access to internet services and equipment, but still, born in the technological generation, they took ownership of the tools very quickly and effectively, facilitating the teacher-student relationship for remote teaching.”

Each of the papers in this volume tells us an interesting story about the teaching, learning, and managing education from both teachers’ and students’ perspective. Importantly, the authors have drawn up lessons that can be learned from their research to improve the provision of education for sectors covering from elementary to university level. The authors’ research has involved the perspectives of students, families, teachers, and professors. Some of the research have involved large scale data sets while others are based in-depth analyses interview data from small-scale research. One of the key methodological innovations that feature across the research reported in this volume is the use of remote data collection methods, while adhering to safety and ethical guidelines during the pandemic.

As Educators we stand out for resilience and hope, oppose erratic public policies that ignore the people they should protect. We stand out for the millions of lives that

succumbed to the Coronavirus, the Ebola virus, Malaria and other neglected diseases, and all other conditions of poverty and lack of access to knowledge. With the contributions of the authors, we stand out for the hope of a better world that we are helping to build day-by-day in each classroom, now mostly in virtual form, but with a real message that we should learn the lessons of this year and keep improving the nets of justice and solidarity for a peaceful and better world for everyone.

This Special Edition is a landmark for our magazine as the first international edition, in an effort to give greater visibility to research in technological education and to collaborate with multidisciplinary and multicultural research in education.

We welcome all authors, readers, and future contributors to enjoy the next pages!

*Juliana de Lucena and Palitha Edirisingha*

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