

Issue topic: International perspectives on social education

EDITORIAL

Editorial

Internationalizing education

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Originally, I had intended to provide the readers with an introduction into international education and to demonstrate the overlap of the two fields: international and social education. But I feel this editorial can no longer be just an intellectual exercise around theoretical concepts of International Education. The COVID-19 pandemic has painfully divided our families, our societies and exposed the horrifying inequities that exist in our world. It has shown that global issues affect us as much as local ones. **Now, more than ever, our schools and universities need to foster international collaboration and build international competencies to produce knowledge and graduates that have a global impact.**

COVID-19 challenges us to find novel ways to stay interconnected as it makes us realize that internationalization is not just about physical mobility (travelling), nor about making revenue from international student fees. *Internationalization is about 'harmonization of academic curricula, sharing quality systems across the globe, building environment-friendly policies, designing joint curricula, learning from each other how to overcome gender issues, forming university alliances in order to mobilize and speed up the production of new knowledge, but above all, it facilitates transcultural communication'* says Prof. Jaroslav Miller, Rector of Palacký University Olomouc, and winner of the 2019 Award for Excellence in Internationalization from the European Association of International Educators (E. Janebová, personal communication, April 14, 2020).

In view of the current crisis, it is time for a closer look into the internationalization learning outcomes of our courses, how to design *joint online courses* and to make use of the existing diversity at our campuses and local communities (*Internationalization at home*). Virtual spaces and collaborative online platforms not only allow these to happen, but also make internationalization more accessible to those who have been prevented from participating in mobility programs because of personal barriers (for example, taking care of small children) or institutional embedded inequities (for example, gender for academics, and socio-cultural background of students).

When the whole world is seeking solutions for a global crisis, **international education should not divide the world; it should interconnect and help us to unite it.** We need to find new virtual ways to collaborate internationally, or for ways that we can bring diversity to home institutions with means other than mobility. This search compels us to investigate the foundational practices and embedded mechanisms of international education. It also provides an opportunity to refocus the rationale for internationalization onto what international collaboration should bring; not only to our institutions, but also to society and the world.

'Internationalization' has been a buzz word used by global policy makers, by the European Commission, by the Czech Ministry of Education in its new Internationalization Strategy for 2021-2025, and by most **Czech universities that claim internationalization to be one of their top priorities. However, Czech academia have done little to invest in research and international education** to back up and guide their institutional practices.

We know that there were some five million internationally mobile students around the world in 2019. However, with the unprecedented collapse in international physical mobility due to COVID-19, we are faced with a new challenge – **we need to re-conceptualize how we internationalize.** We need to acknowledge that internationalization does not equal mobility and find novel ways to keep our universities international at home and internationally connected from home. The challenges that have arisen due to the crisis can show us how to do it better: **more meaningfully, more comprehensively and more inclusively.**

I call on social educators and experts from other fields that work with diversity to help us to meet this challenge. You are sensitized to inequities, trained in cultivating relationships and in reaching out to diverse populations. You are experienced and have skills in bringing people together, understanding diversity and in empowering individuals and marginalized groups. Your work and research can help universities reconnect with the world in novel ways that are more inclusive!

What is international education?

Trailblazing international education in the Czech Republic is not an easy task. The English term 'International Education', or its literal translation *mezinárodní vzdělávání*, is confusing to many. International education does not fit into the traditional Czech scheme of educational sciences (*pedagogiky*) and finding it a home in other Czech social sciences faculties seems difficult as well. In its nature it is **an interdisciplinary field of knowledge** because it aims to answer interdisciplinary questions. Professor Josef A. Mestenhauser (2011) counted some 16 traditional disciplines relevant to international education, for example, international relations, communication, cultural studies, education, organizational management.

International educators need to master cognitive flexibility over several traditional disciplines to provide quality insights that will translate into institution-wide impacts on policy and the practice of internationalization. In order to perform multiple roles and lead internationalization of universities, international educators need to have a background in international education, be actively involved in expert communities of international educators, and most of all, to back up their performance with research. **As a consequence** of the lack of understanding of the required professional background of international educators (non-existent translation *mezinárodní pedagog/žka*) and of the complexity of the role, **Czech universities suffer from a lack of in-depth discourse on the topic.**

International education as a discipline is not an invention of the 21st century; it has been out there for at least 80 years (see [Mestenhauser, 2011](#)). A current search on Google Scholar with the terms 'internationalization' and 'higher education' returns more than 80,000 results with Sense, Stylus, and Routledge among the many publishing houses producing books and series on International education. This journal issue is just a small contribution to the vast amount of literature on the topic. However, it is one of the few scholarly works published in the Czech Republic.

Universities, national bodies and organizations that have fostered research and built strong academic departments in international education include The Hague University of Applied Sciences and Groening-Stenden University (both in the Netherlands), Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore (Italy), Boston College (USA), and the University of Minnesota (USA). Unfortunately international education has been at the margin of the scholarly agenda in the Czech Republic. Czech universities have confined internationalization to administrative units. These have experienced practitioners and do a great job, but their policies are not backed up with rigorous theoretical learning, and they are unlikely to pass on their knowledge to others, either in published scholarship or training. This results in internalization through trial and error and in reinventing the wheel. The Czech higher education sector urgently needs to prioritize and invest in internationalization research and international education

Moving from 'mobility' to comprehensive internationalization

Internationalization is often wrongly assessed simply in terms of numbers: of incoming and outgoing mobilities, international student recruitment, and international publications. However, internationalization should be comprehensive, that is, **a system-wide organizational transformation.** It should permeate through everything – how we think, teach, research, publish, and manage institutions as well as how institutions serve societies. *'Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced*

by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units' (Hudzik, 2011, p. 6).

International educators agree on two critical denominators of comprehensive internationalization - that it is **a comprehensive process that improves the quality of higher education as well as contributing to the good of society** and that **it concerns all university stakeholders**; leaders, academics, non-academic staff, and students are all key agents of change. According to the latest EAIE Barometer Study (EAIE, 2019) for internationalization to be successful the processes need to be at the core of the university's mission and encompass a wide range of activities. Furthermore it demands cross-sectoral engagement and collaboration.

It would be a grave mistake to think that internationalization is simply about transplanting knowledge or copying ideas from abroad. In the post-communist Czech Republic, **internationalization requires a mindshift** from the old days of 'this is how we do it here' to a much more unpredictable and cognitively difficult path of searching, learning and processing knowledge from multiple sources to come up with novel solutions in different socio-cultural contexts. To successfully take a concept from one context to another, higher order thinking skills are required – systems thinking, integrative, comparative, cross-cultural future thinking, and to be able to use *emic* and *etic* perspectives on the researched phenomena (Mestenhauser, 2011, p. 56).

The first step is to acknowledge that what we know and teach is culturally-bound; the next is to unlearn existing competence and acquire new intellectual competence; and finally we need to teach these to our graduates. We cannot expect them to be future catalysts of innovative, culturally sensitive, and internationally valuable solutions with existing competences. Leading international educators keep reminding us that we cannot rely on quickly outdated content and information; the cognitive abilities required for dealing with diversity are 21st century skills necessary for future generations of employees and universities (see for example, Coelen & Gribble, 2019).

Institutions that rely on mobilities and have not perceived internationalization as a comprehensive process find themselves paralyzed by the travel ban. Most Czech universities have not built the internal resources of skills and knowledge of **how to do internationalization at home activities**, even though international educators have been heavily advocating this for the last 18 years! Unfortunately, some Czech universities have confined internationalization activities to specialized administrative units based around grant programs and mobilities and they do not have trained internationalization experts who can support academics in different ways, for example, in designing study programs to internationalize at home and international collaborative teaching online. Furthermore, the Czech universities that have aimed at comprehensive internationalization have unrealistically allocated the task of transforming their whole institution onto these single units instead of engaging and collaborating across the university.

With scholarship of international education almost non-existent in the Czech Republic, university leaders and academics are unaware of the possible complexity and depth of international collaboration and how this can benefit universities and society. **Rather than envisaging the rationale in terms of numbers, universities should see it as a means of quality improvement of university functions and products including outreach to the society** (see study by Uwe Brandenburg within this issue).

Internationalization with and for all

Universities have frequently ignored the inequity mechanisms for disadvantaged academics and students that are embedded in our institutions, and mirrored these inequities in access to mobility and engagement in internationalization. Moreover, in the name of international education many new unequal practices have emerged including double standards for international and home students, in fees masked under 'language of instruction,' or in salaries for international and home academics, masked under 'attractiveness.' Furthermore, mobilities might have been used as a reward system for academics, instead of being a prerequisite for quality research and teaching for everyone. The current

system, where the emphasis has been on numbers of mobilities rather than the quality of outcomes, has allowed and magnified these inequities.

An international education should not be for the benefit of a specific group of students or academics, it should be for everyone; international collaboration should not be for the benefit of an elite group of academics, it should be an integral part of how all academics work. The simplistic travel-focused model of **internationalization has not been accessible to all**. It has not delivered quality outcomes for all graduates, even though everyone has to deal with current and future global issues.

Lower numbers of international student recruitment might eventually have a positive impact in bringing us back to the original WHY of internationalization: why study abroad is important, why universities collaborate internationally, why create internationally diverse school settings, why enhance international scholarship. One thing we can hope for is that COVID-19 will accelerate the search for novel innovative ways of receiving an international education so that everyone can experience the benefits – **for the individual, for institutional quality and for local and global societies**.

As their first step, Czech universities can tap into the reservoir of knowledge of existing academic departments of inclusive education, intercultural education, social education, as well as management and pedagogy – all those have expertise with diversity. The conversations can start with those that are already dealing with diversity at the university, such as centres for students with individual needs, or initiatives for marginalized students and gender inequality, etc. Unfortunately, these units frequently compete over budgets in the highly competitive and siloed academic environment. However, without a consensus on core values and the rationale for internationalization based on quality and inclusiveness such cross-sectoral collaboration is simply unrealistic.

Searching for the intersection of international and social education

This special issue demonstrates that **social and international education share common topics of interest, common rationales, and common methods and perspectives**. The volume encompasses diverse voices with different perspectives and cultural backgrounds of contributors from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa. It also reflects the interdisciplinarity of our field in calling for comprehensive, institution-wide internationalization. In the quest of finding common grounds between educators, scholars and non-academic staff (see also [Johnstone, 2014](#)) as well as to allow for interdisciplinary conversations around common topics, this issue has diverted from the journal's traditional structure and categories of topics.

The first section provides an introduction to international education and offers wisdom and long-term experience from senior, acclaimed international educators such as **Hanneke Teekens** (former NUFFIC Board of Directors) and **Jos Walenkamp** (Professor Emeritus at THUAS). They remind us of the international role of universities and the underpinning values of international education and the need to internationalize what we teach in order to produce graduates with international competences. **Uwe Brandenburg** provides a thorough study into the current conceptualizations connecting internationalization of higher education institutions with reaching out to society. The present society needs are voiced in contribution, by **John Moravec** (founder of Education Futures), who invites us to ask challenging questions about the future vision of international education in 'knowmad society'.

Gayle Woodruff (System-wide Director of Internationalization and winner of NAFSA Award for Leadership in Internationalization) describes the legacy of Internationally Distinguished Professor Emeritus Josef A. Mestenhauser at University Minnesota in empowering students to be leaders of internationalization at the University of Minnesota. Woodruff continues that legacy, for example, by influencing visiting students such as Masaryk University social education student **Michal Černý** who shares a fresh perspective on Jan Amos Komenský in his paper in the following section. **Adams Ogirima Onivehu** offers interesting findings from his investigations into the realm of students of social work in Nigeria. **Christopher Williams** adds the unique insight of social education students at Masaryk University into their study abroad experiences. Moreover, **Tomáš Michalík** and **Jakub Hladík** pose

questions connected to the future of social education students and their role as social educators are posed in position papers.

Aruna Raman invites educators to re-conceptualize how they teach courses, for example development education, in order to be respectful and inclusive of Global South Experts. **Silvie Svobodová** reports on an investigation into environmental literacy and how this international concept has been integrated in the Czech education system. Many readers will remember that 20 years ago the word 'gender' was not part of the Czech language, in the same way as international education; thankfully, 'gender-sensitive education' has now found its way into the Czech curriculum and discourse. However, **Dagmar Krišová**, **Dorottya Rédei**, and **Claudia Schneider** remind us through their international project that work on the embedded gender inequities in the society is not yet finished. Interculturalists, **Lenka Gulová**, **Jana Zerzová** and **Jakub Hladík** point out that interculturality is the most obvious common denominator for international and social education; together, they present the use of a tool for intercultural learning (designed by Tara Hervey, renowned international educator and interculturalist from Minnesota and Founder of True North organization). **Eva Janebová**, with the support of her colleagues **Soňa Nykodýmová** and **Nikola Vičíková**, in their presentation, share useful tips on how educators can develop international partnerships to internationalize their academic work. The issue concludes with interesting information on the initiative of Ndlovu Youth Choir in South Africa and invitations to upcoming international conferences at Palacký University Olomouc from **Milena Őbrink Hobzová** and **Markus Johan Őbrink**. Moreover, call for papers invites authors to contribute to upcoming issue.

I would like to acknowledge the work of all the listed contributors as well as of the many reviewers who have provided their scholarly advice. Deep thanks go to Jitka Vaculíková from the Editorial board.

Let us join in collaborating across departments, institutions and national and international boundaries in building capacities in internationalization in the higher education sector, in shaping the discourse and the reality of the next phase of internationalization of our universities; this will not just be about travelling, but also about transforming our minds, schools and societies!

Thank you

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