

## EDITORIAL

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### Research and education: the necessary dialogue

Dialogue between educational research and school life is not only necessary but vital for both. It is a matter of positive interdependence: the absence of a fruitful alliance prevents them from fulfilling their purposes effectively.

If research does not engage with real problems faced by schools and fails to support the constant improvement of teaching practices, both initial and continuous teacher training become nothing more than self-referential discourse. Unfortunately, for many teachers, the term ‘academic’ does not refer to a place that produces interesting, useful, and applicable research; instead, it is associated with notions like ‘far from reality, irrelevant, abstract, and useless’.

If teaching does not embrace dialogue with research, school life may resort to the mentality of ‘we have always done it this way’ or mindlessly follow the latest trends, possibly influenced by social media. This approach lacks critical discussion and evaluation of teaching practices’ effectiveness. Even the initial and continuous teacher training programs should focus on developing reflective processes that encourage real and continuous innovation, addressing students’ diverse and evolving growth needs.

Educational research must be grounded in school life and maintain an ongoing dialogue with the field to avoid becoming abstract and theoretical without generating tangible change and improvement. Similarly, teaching needs research to foster a culture of continuous innovation; otherwise, it risks perpetuating existing practices and failing to meet the evolving needs of society for the common good.

Recognizing the necessary positive interdependence between these two worlds requires moving beyond the vision of merely applying theory to practice, which is still common. Instead, we should view practice as a realm that generates knowledge, essential for enriching experiences. This re-evaluation of teachers as reflective researchers encourages immediate dialogue with evidence-based educational research while also questioning and informing theoretical production.

This journal’s special issue aims to highlight the fruitfulness of educational and didactic research, which engages in dialogue and a service-oriented approach with schools and teachers’ professionalism, promoting thus staying and doing research on their practices.

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The articles included in this issue, edited by guest editor Federico Batini, consist of in-depth analyses of selected presentations that contributed to an interesting and important conference titled “Educational Research for Teacher Training<sup>1</sup>,” organized by the CRESPI Inter-University Center and the University of Perugia.

The special issue’s first contribution, by Federico Batini, focuses on the complex aspects of implicit and explicit early school leaving. It provides a detailed analysis of the phenomenon and examines how it can impact the economy, society, and the future of young people. The article questions methods of measurement and intervention.

The subsequent article, by Gabriella Agrusti, draws from international research data to highlight the impact each teacher can have on teaching-learning processes as she considers them as one of the factors that can make a difference in students’ learning levels.

In his contribution, Roberto Trinchero reports on the main research results on teacher effectiveness, integrating them with the evidence produced by the Evidence Informed Education strand. The focus is orienting teacher training courses to improve classroom teaching practices, moving away from improvisation and do-it-yourself approaches.

Maurizio Gentile and colleagues present three projects aimed at promoting students’ non-cognitive skills, two in secondary school and one in primary school. They discuss the outcomes, common elements, and differences characterizing these initiatives.

Laura Carlotta Foschi’s contribution proposes and exemplifies training activities to support the educational use of digital technologies by lower and upper secondary school teachers. The focus is on planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Stefano Pasta and colleagues describe the experimental project “Digital Civic Education: A Hypothesis for Primary School,” a research-intervention aimed at promoting the acquisition and exercise of Onlife Citizenship skills.

Annamaria Gentile’s article aims to clarify the complex construct of “Learning to Learn”. Starting from the literature and results of an exploratory survey, she attempts to suggest some possible interpretations of this concept for childhood.

Maria Ermelinda De Carlo and Giulia Toti’s study shows how University School Business Cooperation can support the transferability of GreenComp in school contexts. The focus is on the construct of ecological competence, considering the focus groups carried out with TIM employees and teachers from all levels of schools.

Silvia Ferrante and colleagues present research focused on building territorial alliances between schools and out-of-school institutions through the instrument of the Community Educational Pact. They share some results of an initial study conducted with teachers from eight schools in a territory with a high dropout rate.

Sara Germani and colleagues’ article investigates the extent of training in promoting positive attitudes of curriculum teachers towards inclusive practices. It emphasizes the need for training to develop inclusive competencies for all teachers, regardless of their roles.

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1. The report of the conference has been published in the previous issue of the journal (<https://ricercaazione.iprase.tn.it/article/view/272>). Additionally, the report contains a link to the book that includes all the abstracts of the interventions and research presented during the conference.

Andrea Baroncelli and colleagues explore the association between individual emotional-relational variables in the personal sphere and variables of the professional emotional-relational dimension of 193 kindergarten, primary, and lower secondary school teachers.

Mirca Montanari illustrates in her article the results of a short questionnaire proposed to pre-service support teachers concerning the acquisition of incoming skills and methodological-educational practices during their initial training. This enhances their profile as inclusive teachers.

The contribution by Francesco Marsili and Marta Pellegrini offers a broad reflection on the practical and theoretical implications of identifying gifted children and young people. They base their discussion on the data obtained from a meta-analysis.

Elena Pacetti and colleagues present research to investigate how communicative exchanges mediated by digital contexts can influence relational dynamics between teachers and parents, as well as among parents. They formulate guidelines to support the actors involved in building a more inclusive and effective school-family communication.

Barbara Caprara and colleagues' article presents a research professional development path currently underway with twenty kindergartens based on the promotion of teaching and learning methodologies freely chosen by children in a structured learning environment. The teacher prepares stimuli and materials to implement educational-inclusive environments.

Daniela Caserta and Eleonora Zorzi illustrate participatory research that addresses the invisibility of children with high potential profiles at school. Their work suggests that specific teacher training paths can serve as new observational filters to favour the identification of students with these characteristics.

The contribution by Damiano Meo and Luigi d'Alonzo describes two analysis tools designed to help teachers evaluate the characteristics that make textbooks suitable for all pupils in the class group. The data can facilitate reflection on the characteristics of the manuals during the text adoption, stimulating an inclusive discussion on the learning experience.

Lastly, Eleonora Zorzi and Marina Santi propose a reflection on the pedagogical and project design aspects of the concept of "unrepeatability," its relationship with improvisation, and the integrative background of equity and well-being. This research professional development path focuses on the meshwork, the grid, to enhance the unrepeatability of the plots that characterize our lives and underline their uniqueness and diversity even more.

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