Editorial: Charting our new path in education in a post-pandemic world

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Editorial on the Research Topic
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In the spring of 2020, and COVID-19 reached pandemic status, the entire education community was forced into an unplanned online learning experiment. With the sudden closure of schools and move to remote instruction and virtual learning with little adjustment, teachers, administrators, and students suddenly found themselves in uncharted territory. Education reporter Mangrum (2020) noted "The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a lot of problems facing public schools—but it didn't create most of them. Most of the inequities existed long before the pandemic. The only difference is who was affected and who was paying attention." UNESCO reported that the pandemic has caused educational disruption and school closures for over 1.2 billion students (Giannini and Brandolino, 2020). The effects of this educational disruption are just beginning to be measured and will likely have ripple effects for years to come.

To address this unprecedented, rapid change in education, a Research Topic to inform the broader international educational community was opened for articles related to the conditions and shifts in classrooms related to assessment, standards of education, gaps in learning, innovative approaches to learning, and support of emerging alternative methods of learning. A total of 15 manuscripts were received and assessed for inclusion based on their relevance to the educational challenges during the COVID-19 time period. To help educators make their way in the new challenges of pandemic-disrupted education, we sought articles to illuminate innovative, collaborative, ethical, and effective educational practices in virtual and hybrid teaching contexts. Twelve manuscripts were accepted.

We identified four broad categories of manuscripts from those received: Impact on instructors, impact on student's knowledge and skills, impact on teaching practices, and focus on administrative practices.

Impact on instructors

Besides missing the human connection and contact with students, instructors experienced fatigue with using new technology to teach virtually and asynchronously. They also experienced frustrations related to the factors that stood between them and their ability to support their student's social-emotional growth and wellness as a result of the pandemic. Regardless of these barriers, they also found creative ways to connect with students, extend instruction, and solve problems. Sahito et al. addressed the perception of university teachers about online teaching during COVID-19, the challenges, issues, and problems faced by university teachers and how to cope to overcome the issues, challenges, and problems posed by the pandemic. Zara et al. explored the concept of pedagogical resilience in Thailand and the Philippines concerning teachers' personal, professional, and social attitudes toward teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study highlights the resilience, the mental resistance to difficulties and stresses that teachers exhibited as they planned for how they would respond to the pandemic and both navigate and survive the challenges. Woltran et al. evaluated the perception of Austrian elementary school teachers when distance teaching and the challenges they faced due to COVID-19 that included a lack of personal contact with students; additional workload and more stress, a lack of technical equipment and digital skills; and an inability to offer individual support for students at risk. Finally Sokal and Parmigiani used a newly developed set of global competence rubrics to explore the relationships between 115 teacher candidates' global competence, demographic variables, and programmatic variables within their teacher education program. The restrictions on travel necessitated by the pandemic do not prevent virtual exchanges, and this study illuminates the many online project-based learning activities that allowed teachers to facilitate intercultural collaborative projects and school-based global consciousness learning opportunities. These are noted for their capacity to develop empathy, co-operation, negotiation, leadership, and social awareness.

Impact on students

The impacts on students' knowledge and skills caused by the pandemic include academic, behavioral, and emotional areas in university and K-12 settings. Garrad and Page conducted research on student perceptions of learning of an online postgraduate degree course where the authors examined the impact of the design restructure on student perceptions of learning within the course. Classroom expectations remain integral to positive learning environments, whether virtual or in person. Croce and Salter outlined the importance of teaching classroom expectations and provided four factors to consider

in virtual settings to help children transition into brick-and-mortar environments.

Impact on teaching practices

Perspectives and pedagogical methods that influence teaching practices shifted and evolved as a result of the pandemic. Cobo-Rendón et al. gave six recommendations for implementation to ensure blended learning improves teaching practices. Rissanen et al. analyzed the impact of growth mindset pedagogy on the teacher's pedagogical thinking and practices in Finland. They found significant differences between fixed-mindset and growth-mindset teachers. Those teachers who utilized growth mindsets produced deep reflections in ways to use these tools to support students' emotion regulation and generate ideas about how to normalize hardship in learning in unique and useful ways. Notably, GMP offered them tools for working particularly with students whom they had learned to identify as suffering from motivational and emotional problems related to a fixed mindset. Anderson et al. focused attention on two aspects of teacher support and development: creativity and wellbeing and how these are especially important in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the secondary traumatic stress that teachers inevitably experienced. After engaging in online professional development, teachers' creative agency in the classroom increased, replicating some of the results from a pre-pandemic study (Anderson et al.). Campillo-Ferrer and Miralles-Martínez examined teachers' development of low-order cognitive skills with content and language integrated learning in Spain. They analyzed three individual cognitive categories used to foster student's understanding of content in both public and private schools in foreign language and content acquisition in non-language areas. They provided teachers perceptions of the daily challenges making adjustments with space, time and materials available.

Impacts on administration

Administrative focus and practices underwent changes as a result of challenges in the post pandemic world. Facing an administrative audit for an academic program is challenging even under normal circumstances. Kline reviewed the challenges posed by pandemic requirements forcing creation of online meetings for participating partners in local and remote areas to facilitate the academic review process. Kline also discussed utilization of online tools for gathering of data needed during the review process. Administrative implications for instructional practices in delivery options for graduate students in master's programs also include implications for evolving policy requirements. Another administrative strategy that emerged during

the pandemic was reported by Elfarargy et al. To meet the need of training faculty, use of virtual learning was necessitated during the pandemic. Texas mandated face-to-face training expanded to virtual training to allow for equity and convenience.

As we chart a course forward post pandemic, there are many aspects of education to reconsider. As a result, this is an ideal opportunity to pause, reflect on the lessons learned during this health crisis and work together in partnerships between K-12 schools and teacher preparation programs to collaboratively determine the path ahead. As we collectively consider ways to improve, the researchers in this special issue have provided studies to push our thinking on a number of topics that impact students, teachers, administrators, and pedagogical approaches. Now is the time to reconsider and revise our teaching methods and strategies, our pathways for both teacher and student recruitment, retention and incentive practices, assessment, and accreditation approaches. Citing a Rand study conducted in January of 2021, Zamarro et al. suggested that teachers' levels of stress and burnout have reached all-time highs starting during the pandemic, but are still continuing. "In March 2021, 42% of teachers declared they had considered leaving or retiring from their current position during the last year. Of these, slightly more than half say it was because of COVID-19" (Zamarro et al., 2022). As alarms now sound suggesting there is no end to the steep increases in teacher turnover and growing teacher shortages it is imperative that we consider what opportunities can be found amidst these new challenges for the next phase.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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