
TRANSFORMATIONS OF CZECH EDUCATION RESEARCH AND THE ROLE OF CERA. FROM RETROSPECTIVE TO PERSPECTIVE

PLENARY LECTURE ABSTRACT

Over the past three decades, Czech education research has undergone the **process** of professionalisation, methodological cultivation, and conceptual, institutional, and personal revitalisation. In this way, it has responded to the challenges faced by the transformation of education, the internationalisation of research, the changes of state science policies, and the arrival of a new generation of researchers.

Education science strives to be recognised as a relevant social science in full standing with other scientific disciplines; it is focused on the reality of education, contributing to improved quality of education and school systems through cooperation with teachers and communication with education governance frameworks. A major role in this process is played by the Czech Education Research Association (CERA/ČAPV), which is commemorating 30 years of its existence this year. As a professional organisation, CERA endeavours to bolster the prestige of education research, to make use of acquired knowledge, to reflect the needs of education practice and the new challenges of a changing educational landscape. One significant CERA contribution is the support of cooperation and friendly interpersonal relationships among the expert community.

Taking note of the state of education research in the pre-1989 period and the expectations in the 1990s, when CERA was established, the author will attempt to assess the extent to which CERA is succeeding in the mission given by its founders, namely, to coordinate and monitor the development of Czech education research. This reflection will combine external and internal conditions and effects of development, emphasising the strengths and weaknesses of Czech education research and the opportunities and dangers for future activities in CERA.

In the retrospective, the presentation will highlight the role of CERA in the broader context of the transformation of education and the growth of unfettered education research after November 1989. The following phases will be identified: *initiation phase*, in which the concept and institutional structure of education research was formed and the programme goals and mission of the association were formulated alongside the ongoing transformation of Czech education (CERA, 1993); *stabilisation phase*, in which emphasis was placed on the methodology and quality of research projects (including the organisation of methodology workshops for doctoral students) and key focus was given to the ethical and social aspects of research. Education science became a “normal discipline” (Kuhn, 1997) with its own culture, thematic spread of research subjects, informational and institutional base, and expert community participating, with relative success, in grant competitions and development projects. The following *reflective innovation phase* augmented internal critical reflections of the state of education research, which became a regular part of discussions within the discipline and in which CERA conferences play a major role. Besides the doyens of education research (Průcha, Mareš, Štech, Rýdl, Walterová), CERA conferences now include speeches by members of the younger generation, which entered the field after 1989. Positive shifts and innovations can be seen, which improve the quality of education research and reinforce CERA’s monitoring function in the domestic research

community, which has a more significant impact on the formation of key programme documents of education policy (Strategie 2030+) and on expert activities. The thematic scope has broadened to encompass new aspects such as transdisciplinarity and networking. The past two years have seen dramatic changes take place in the education system due to pandemic restrictions, which have opened up considerations of education in physical and digital environments – the great contemporary global theme and a challenge for Czech education research as well.

This lecture draws from CERA conference proceedings, research papers of the academics in question, and information gleaned from queries to CERA members. The suggested perspectives of CERA build on inspirations from comparisons with the activities of other education research associations abroad.

The author has undertaken to make this presentation, which is not without subjective perspectives, with the license of a witness with personal experience as one of the founding members of CERA, who has actively contributed to the programmes of many conferences over the years, giving plenary lectures, presenting within sub-groups or hosting discussions, and so she expects debate and alternative views on the topic.

Key words: research, expert community, role of associations, development phase, science policy, perspectives

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