

Introduction

The 2026, Issue 1 (No. 279) of *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*, entitled “Educating Teachers, Empowering Education: Insights from International Research”, focuses on the central role of teachers and the critical importance of their education and professional development in contemporary educational contexts. Teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge, but also mentors, innovators, and ethical guides whose work shapes the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of learners. The quality of education, in turn, is deeply intertwined with the preparation, empowerment, and ongoing development of educators. This special issue underscores that teacher education and professional growth are essential both for individual teacher agency and for the advancement of equitable, effective, and innovative education systems worldwide.

The contributions collected in this issue address key dimensions of teacher professionalism, including empowerment, autonomy, collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous professional learning. They also explore the integration of digital technologies, narrative approaches, and socio-emotional competencies in teacher education and practice. By examining these themes, the issue emphasises that teaching is both an intellectual and moral endeavour – a profession that requires creativity, ethical reflection, and resilience, as well as the capacity to adapt to changing educational landscapes.

This issue has a distinctly international character, featuring research from Central and Southern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the United Kingdom. The included articles are:

- Makito Yurita – Reframing teacher empowerment: Between policy logics and professional autonomy
- Jaroslava Ševčíková, Jitka Plischke, Jitka Nábělková, Iva Koribská – Development of professional autonomy of secondary school teachers in the Czech Republic
- Pete Boyd – Collaborative professional inquiry: A powerful driver for teachers’ development of research-informed practice
- Jack Whitehead, Marie Huxtable – Living educational theory research as values-led continual professional development

- Elda Margarita Monetti – The narrative approach in undergraduate and in-service teaching training devices
- Gloria Marsay – South African teachers' perceptions and experience of social emotional learning
- Dragana Božić Lenard, Ivan Lenard – Challenges, collaboration, and career sustainability: Experiences of school counsellors in Eastern Croatia
- Lan Nhi Truong Thi, Joanna Madalińska-Michalak, Nguyen Tien Hoang – Digital technologies in teaching: Insights from Vietnamese teacher educators through a European perspective
- Zuzanna Zbróg, Agnieszka Szplit – Transition to the teaching profession: Report on focus group research on the needs of novices

Together, these contributions demonstrate the intellectual vitality, ethical significance, and societal importance of teacher education and empowerment as a global field of research. Studies from Japan, Croatia, South Africa, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, Argentina, and Poland reveal that, despite differences in educational systems, there is a shared commitment to recognising teachers as reflective professionals, creative agents of change, and vital contributors to the development of society. Teacher empowerment and professional development are not merely policy objectives; they are human and professional conditions – the capacities to act with understanding, empathy, and critical imagination in complex and dynamic educational environments.

This collection is therefore both scholarly and invitational. It calls on researchers, teacher educators, and policymakers to see professional learning not as compliance with external standards, but as a living, dialogic, and reflective process. Teaching is not merely an occupation, but a moral and intellectual practice sustained by community, collaboration, and hope. Across these diverse contexts, we observe the contours of a truly international language of teacher empowerment and professional development – one that affirms the centrality of teachers and their education in shaping effective, equitable, and innovative educational systems.

This issue is intended for educational researchers, teacher educators, pedagogy students, practitioners, and policymakers who are interested in fostering teacher development, professional growth, and educational excellence. By highlighting both the significance of teachers and the foundational role of their education, this special issue affirms that high-quality education and the future of learning depend on empowered, well-prepared, and reflective educators.

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