

Introduction

Education serves as a cornerstone of societal progress, shaping the identities, values, and opportunities of individuals and communities. Within the dynamic landscape of European education, scholars and practitioners continually strive to advance pedagogical practices that foster inclusive, equitable, and empowering learning environments. The journal volume “Advancing Education in Europe: Perspectives on Identity, Trust, Inclusive Practices, and Teacher Development” offers a comprehensive exploration of key themes and insights shaping the future of education across the continent.

The articles included in this volume represent a diverse array of perspectives and research approaches, each contributing to our collective understanding of the multifaceted nature of European education. From examinations of youth identities and social trust to discussions on inclusive practices and teacher development, the volume encompasses a broad spectrum of topics relevant to contemporary educational discourse. Each contribution offers a unique perspective, shedding light on critical aspects of education and providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and teachers alike.

Alistair Ross’s article introduces the use of deliberative discussions as a research method, offering a qualitative and mixed methods approach to exploring young Europeans’ identities and values. Ross demonstrates how the method of open-ended discussions can yield rich insights into geopolitical affiliations and values, providing a nuanced understanding of young people’s perspectives.

Anna Wilkomirska and Barbara Murawska explore the concept of social trust among youth in the context of depopulation processes. Their research sheds light on the attitudes and perceptions of young people towards their communities, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for fostering social cohesion and resilience in the face of demographic shifts.

Monika Skura’s article offers an overview of support mechanisms for students with special educational needs in the Slovenian education system, outlining a tiered intervention model aimed at addressing the unique requirements of diverse learners. Skura’s analysis provides valuable insights into inclusive education practices and their implications for policy and practice.

Daniela Worek explores the role of mobility in fostering the internationalization of teacher education, with a special focus on European identity. By examining the impact of mobility experiences on professional development and cultural exchange, Worek's article underscores the importance of transnational collaboration in shaping the future of education.

Ewelina Rzońca and Joanna Madalińska-Michalak's article presents research on mentoring practices in Polish schools, drawing on the perspectives of school principals and pre-service teachers. Through qualitative interviews, Rzońca and Madalińska-Michalak explore the benefits and challenges of mentoring initiatives, and suggestions for improving mentoring effectiveness, highlighting the importance of constructivist approaches to professional development.

Katarzyna Brzosko-Barratt's contribution examines the professional development of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers in Poland, offering insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by educators in this context. Brzosko-Barratt's research contributes to our understanding of effective strategies for supporting CLIL teachers in enhancing their pedagogical practices.

Nigora Mamadaminova and Sabina Khadjikhanova's paper presents the findings on teacher professional development (TPD) in Uzbekistan, focusing on teachers' experiences and challenges. Using qualitative methods and global data, it explores the obstacles teachers face in accessing training while balancing heavy workloads and personal duties. Despite these challenges, teachers acknowledge the importance of professional development for career growth. The study emphasizes the need for better support and policies to improve Uzbekistan's education system, particularly regarding time management.

Collectively, the articles featured in this volume weave together a rich tapestry of insights that illuminate the multifaceted landscape of education in Europe. Through rigorous research and thoughtful analysis, the contributors explore the challenges, opportunities, and innovations that define the educational discourse of our time. At the heart of this exploration are four central themes: identity, trust, inclusive practices, and teacher development. These themes serve as critical touchstones, guiding our understanding of the complex dynamics at play within European education systems.

As teachers, researchers, and policymakers navigate the complexities of the educational landscape, this volume offers a robust foundation upon which to build inclusive, equitable, and empowering educational practices that serve the needs of all learners. Ultimately, this volume seeks to inform and inspire transformative action, inviting stakeholders to collaborate in the collective endeavor of building a more just, compassionate, and effective educational ecosystem for generations to come.

Joanna Madalińska-Michalak