

**Book Review: *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* by David R. Cole, Mehri Mirzaei Rafe, and Gui Ying Annie Yang-Heim**

The development of education is closely intertwined with time; the dynamic changes in time not only drive the innovation of educational concepts but also profoundly influence teaching practices and policy formulation. As a component of teaching and research, time thus possesses its own vitality. Time is at the heart of this book, offering a fresh look at how it shapes educational thought and practice. Drawing on insights from learners, educators, and researchers, the authors explore how time and rhythm play out in everything from classroom instruction and curriculum design to arts education, vocational training, lifelong learning, and policy-making. They remind us that time is not just about clocks and schedules; it deeply influences the way we grow, learn, and interact within educational settings.

Although time can feel abstract—lacking a physical form—it is woven into the everyday realities of schools and institutions. This includes the rhythms of teaching, the structure of lessons, and the broader cultural, economic, and political factors that affect when and how students learn. Far from being a mere administrative concern, time underscores our cycles of development, impacts the goals we set for education, and shapes the social environments in which learning takes place. By combining careful observation, thoughtful reflection, and robust research, the authors shine a light on an often-overlooked dimension of education. They show how time profoundly affects cognitive growth, teaching strategies, institutional organization, and even the timing and length of assessments. Their work urges us to think more critically about the role time plays in shaping educational outcomes and invites readers to take a closer look at how this silent force influences both individual learning journeys and the broader framework of education as a whole.

This book includes multiple authors' contributions, which seek to answer the question of how time-related constraints affect educational contexts and environments within formal or informal systems. First, the authors draw attention to the distinction that should be made between the three types of rhythms: biological, psychological, and social, and how these rhythms restrict an individual's capacity to perceive, feel, take action, and think about transformations within certain settings. Through these explorations, the book opens new perspectives for examining the diverse impacts of "temporal constraints" on education, such as the understanding of temporality concerning "sustainability" and the "Anthropocene" prompted by environmental issues, as well as reflections on the temporality of a "post-human" future world. Additionally, the book points out that beyond traditional clock time, the evolution of imagined learning must question the fluidity of experiences and desires and how they relate to the

temporalities of educational institutions. The book also suggests studying how the fragmentation of time affects the entire educational lifecycle, exploring the contrast between long-term perspectives and daily urgencies across different time scales, and the impact of the pace of technological and cultural changes on education. Multiple chapters in the book provide key insights into the temporal dimensions of educational processes and knowledge production, emphasizing the non-linear, non-progressive, and diverse temporality of learning and development. The authors discuss the importance of a process-oriented perspective, question the transitional and threshold phases in change, analyze specific educational time patterns, and connect the past, present, and future to explain the mechanisms of change. Simultaneously, the book explores different expressions of time experiences, such as "intuition", "eternity", and "timeliness", and integrates studies on biological, psychological, social, and spiritual rhythm phenomena. Finally, some chapters focus on using time experiences as starting points for critical inquiry, emphasizing the ability to interpret and regulate these temporalities when heterogeneous temporalities conflict. Thus, through multidimensional and multi-perspective analysis, this book delves into the complex role of temporality in education and its profound impact on educational practice and theory.

**EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE AND STRUCTURE OF THE COLLECTION**

The editorial team of the book *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* is highly knowledgeable about the subject matter, which greatly benefits this work focused on time in education. David R. Cole, Mehri Mirzaei Rafe, and Gui Ying Annie Yang-Heim have engaged in various disciplines within education, notably the philosophy, psychology, and sociology of educational processes. They have extensive credentials, having published numerous articles and participated in various research projects that demonstrate their expertise in educational theory and practice.

David R. Cole, who draws from both his studies of Deleuze and the field of education, appears to be in a position to elaborate on the temporal aspects of educational research. His focus has contributed towards elaborating better ways of investigating educational activities in relation to time dimensions, and processes of change. Using her experience in the examination of intertwined data and her critical assessment of educational systems through the lens of Roy Bhaskar's philosophy, Mehri Mirzaei Rafe also enriches the diversity of the collection. Gui Ying Annie Yang-Heim, with her experience in teaching and research in early childhood and elementary

education, brings a practical and applied perspective to the editorial team, ensuring that the book's discussions are grounded in real-world educational contexts. The combination of their expertise provides a robust framework for the book, ensuring that the exploration of time in education is approached from multiple angles and with a depth of understanding that covers theoretical, empirical, and practical domains.

The outline of *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* has been planned to direct the reader in a sequential order. The book has seven parts and each of the parts is dedicated to the discussion of a different facet of time in education – starting from the philosophical underpinnings of time and ending with the implications of temporality in educational policy and practice. According to the authors, the first part of the book frames the notion of time as it is understood in educational and management research. They assert the significance of such a notion in the context of the book and provide a brief introduction to it. The remaining chapters discuss the context of time in relation to higher education, school, and curriculum settings. The book also focuses on time within education through the lens of personal experiences, technology, context, and policy, which enables 'an ecological view of time in education' to emerge. A major strength is its holistic approach, addressing philosophical, psychological, sociological, and practical aspects of time in education. By combining theoretical insights with empirical research, the book serves as a comprehensive resource for academics, researchers, and practitioners. Its broad coverage across different educational levels and contexts, along with a well-organized structure, makes the complex role of time in educational systems accessible and engaging. *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* is an invaluable guide for understanding and navigating the multifaceted temporal dimensions of education.

### KEY THEMES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The book commences by elucidating the significance of time in the contexts of teaching, learning, and curriculum development. It explores how various dimensions of time influence the scheduling of educational activities, the structuring of curricula, and the pace at which students acquire knowledge. The authors examine the perception of time from both teachers' and students' perspectives, analyzing how these experiences shape the content that is taught and learned. Time is considered not only as a structural element, encompassing institutional schedules and curriculum sequences but also as an experiential phenomenon, illustrating how education progresses as educators and students interact with one another and the subject matter.

The second theme addresses the ramifications of time-oriented policies on educational practices. Policies that emphasize efficiency and measurable outcomes frequently result in condensed teaching and learning periods, potentially undermining opportunities for in-depth exploration and reflection. The authors advocate for a nuanced understanding of time that accommodates the nonlinear and often unpredictable nature of the educational process. They stress the importance of allowing adequate time for students to

develop comprehensive understanding and enduring skills, rather than prioritizing rapid content delivery for immediate results.

The third perspective examines the impact of historical and societal transformations, particularly within the context of the Anthropocene—the current geological epoch characterized by significant human influence on the Earth's systems. This era presents novel challenges for education, necessitating that educators prepare students not only to meet present economic and social demands but also to assume long-term environmental and societal responsibilities. The book posits that educational objectives must evolve to address these contemporary realities, ensuring that they align with the requirements of a swiftly changing world.

Globalization and technology also feature prominently, as the book considers how these forces are accelerating educational change and expanding the boundaries of learning. With globalization connecting learners across cultures and technology enabling anytime, anywhere learning, the need arises for educational systems that are both adaptable and inclusive, addressing disparities in technology access while supporting flexible learning opportunities.

The book impresses with its range of theoretical frameworks and research methods. It incorporates qualitative methods, like ethnography and phenomenology, to capture the lived experiences of time in educational settings, as well as quantitative approaches, including longitudinal studies and time-series analysis, to provide data on the timing and pacing of educational activities. Integrating philosophical, psychological, and sociological perspectives, the book offers a holistic understanding of time in education. Philosophical discussions probe the nature of time and its links to progress and change, psychological perspectives examine how time is experienced cognitively and emotionally, and sociological approaches look at time's role in social structures and inequalities in education. The incorporation of various points of view enables contemporary authors to analyze the historical and social process changes through different theoretical or methodological lenses. These ideas provide researchers, policymakers, and practitioners a wide perspective on the role of time in education, hence, facilitating the investigation of time in learning.

### CASE STUDIES AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Case studies are an ideal research method for answering "how" and "why" questions about real-life educational phenomena, especially when researchers have limited control over these contexts. *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* uses a range of case studies to bring theoretical discussions to life, providing empirical depth that spans various educational stages—from early childhood to higher education—and covers multiple regions, offering a broad look at how time affects education worldwide. Carefully selected to reflect the diverse ways time operates in education, these case studies include longitudinal studies that follow student and teacher development over time, along with cross-sectional analyses capturing specific educational moments. This approach highlights the push and pull

between rigid institutional schedules and the more natural rhythms of teaching and learning. Some case studies explore external influences, such as economic constraints that impact curriculum pacing or cultural norms that shape student perceptions of time and punctuality.

The empirical findings offer practical insights, revealing that a standardized approach to educational timing doesn't suit everyone, as students develop at their own pace and have unique needs based on personal circumstances. This points to the importance of flexibility in educational planning, where strict schedules can sometimes hinder learning rather than support it. The book argues for policies that allow adjustments based on learners' evolving needs and the dynamic educational environment. Additionally, alternative models, like project-based or asynchronous learning, allow students to engage in learning at a pace that suits them, challenging traditional, rigid approaches to education.

The book's methodological diversity captures time's complex role in education. Qualitative methods like ethnography and phenomenology explore how stakeholders perceive and experience time, offering insights into subtle, lived experiences often missed by quantitative approaches. In contrast, quantitative methods provide a broader perspective, identifying patterns through surveys, statistical analyses, and experimental studies. Mixed-methods approaches combine the depth of qualitative data with the generalizability of quantitative data, offering a more holistic view of time in education.

Various data analysis techniques—from thematic and discourse analysis to statistical modeling and simulations—are employed to handle diverse data types, addressing specific questions about time in education. Ultimately, these case studies and empirical research challenge the assumption that time in education is linear and uniform. Instead, they offer a flexible view that appreciates the varied learning paths students follow. This methodological diversity ensures a well-rounded examination of time, deepening our understanding of how it shapes educational experiences and outcomes.

## **TIME AND THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION**

With the introduction of AI in education, it is clear how precisely this passionate subject shifts our perception of time. In the book, the sociological and educational theorists explore the rise of a 'digital panopticon' where students and educators are under the control of digital networks and communication. Such an environment tends to create a sense of urgency, compressing time and often pushing reflective, deep learning into the background in favor of immediacy. For instance, students may feel the pressure to complete assignments quickly to meet the demands of round-the-clock learning platforms, which can overshadow the value of slowing down for in-depth understanding.

The analysis of this "always-on" culture is particularly thought-provoking. The authors discuss how technology-driven education disrupts traditional academic rhythms,

which once allowed for pauses, reflection, and a more natural flow of learning over a semester or school year. With technology's emphasis on instant responses and quick results, the book notes that long-term educational goals often lose ground to short-term tasks. This shift has implications not only for the quality of education but also for the well-being of students and teachers, who may feel overwhelmed by the continuous demands of digital engagement.

The book presents a balanced perspective on technological advancements in education, recognizing the significant benefits they bring, such as increased accessibility and personalized learning opportunities. Technologies like online courses and AI-powered tools empower students to progress at their own pace, which is especially advantageous for those who require additional time to grasp the material. However, the authors also address the inherent challenges, including the 'digital divide' where unequal access to technology leads to disparities among students. Additionally, the necessity for continual updates to digital curricula can burden educators, adding to their workload.

Looking to the future, the authors offer insightful predictions about the role of technology in education. They acknowledge that AI and digital platforms will persist in promoting flexible learning environments. Nevertheless, they emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance between these innovations and traditional educational methods. The authors advocate for a hybrid approach that combines asynchronous learning, which provides flexibility, with synchronous, structured experiences that preserve the depth and quality of conventional education. For instance, integrating live, interactive classes with periods of self-paced study can uphold educational standards without forfeiting the advantages that technology offers.

Throughout their discussion, the authors urge readers to consider the profound impact of technology on the perception and management of time in education. They warn against allowing technology to dictate an unrelenting pace, instead promoting a return to a more deliberate, human-centered approach that values reflection and quality. This thoughtful stance contributes meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue about the future of education in an increasingly AI-driven world, highlighting the need to balance innovation with the enduring principles of effective teaching and learning.

## **INSIGHTS FOR MODERN EDUCATORS, RESEARCHERS, AND POLICYMAKERS**

The book *Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* makes a critical contribution in opening up a discussion on how time influences and is influenced by education practice, policy, and research. Rather than being viewed as a straightforward, linear process, the book treats "time" as a dynamic, layered concept that changes with contexts and needs. This shift is vital in today's rapidly changing world, where educational models must adapt to meet the diverse demands of students. Among the key matters are the distribution of the natural cycles of learning across students, the jurisdiction of time and social revolutions to the modern education systems, and the synthesis brought by technology as regards

the perception of time in a classroom environment. As an example, while the traditional school system may adhere to an academic year structure, online courses provide a flexible structure in which learners can study at their will and pace. Emphasis is then put on the provision of alternative pedagogical models to meet the variances in students' learning speeds.

The authors provided a profound and extensive theoretical background discussing the intersection of education, philosophy, sociology, and psychology while simultaneously complementing it with insights from practical examples and case studies. This resulted in an in-depth account of the intricacies of time in the educational sector which is useful to educators, researchers as well as policymakers. For instance, project-based learning—where students work on real-world tasks over extended periods—illustrates a model that aligns well with the concept of “fluid time” by allowing students to engage deeply rather than adhering to a strict timeline. The book exhorts the educational community to transcend the conventional ways of teaching and curriculum design while adjusting them to fit individual requirements by inviting interdisciplinary collaboration.

In terms of pedagogy, the book offers an opinion that calls for the consideration of instructional models that allow students to move or shift at their own pace and according to their goals. More adaptive teaching practices, such as asynchronous learning, which are capable of allowing students to complete work at their own pace, emerge as very valuable methods. Such a method is most useful for students who need to spend quality time on certain materials or who prefer working at a different rhythm from the general class. In the same vein, project-based learning serves as a means to span longer timeframes in learning a subject and frees the students to investigate, experiment, and gain a greater comprehension of concepts without worrying about set submission times.

Furthermore, the book states that researchers ought to be more open-minded about the concept of taking time within classroom settings. A more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between time and different learners about the learning context is created by employing the integration of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which is called the mixed-methods approach. In other cases, longitudinal studies that measure and record changes over time can

show the growth and development of students with regard to changing educational paradigms, while qualitative methods such as interviews can better capture the subjective aspects of students' experiences of time.

The book underlines the importance of educational policies that address the long-term growth of education systems and how education systems work. Policies should also be flexible enough to allow for the small and, at times, subtle growths that occur in learners over time, rather than just constraining learners to immediate overbearing expectations. For example, an education policy may encourage schools to adopt a culture of continual improvement instead of requiring all students to achieve specific targets at once. Such an improvement-oriented approach will promote equality models that are fair because education systems should recognize that growth is a process and not a competition.

*Educational Research and the Question(s) of Time* provides a timely and comprehensive perspective on time in education, urging educators, researchers, and policymakers to rethink how time factors into teaching and learning. By advocating for adaptive, inclusive models, the book challenges traditional assumptions and presents new ways to meet the needs of today's learners in a fast-paced, ever-evolving world. This shift toward a flexible understanding of time has the potential to create a more effective and compassionate educational landscape for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Note: The book, titled *Educational research and the question(s) of time* was edited by David R. Cole, Mehri Mirzaei Rafe and Gui Ying Annie Yang-Heim, and published by Springer Nature Singapore in 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3418-4>

Han Wei<sup>1</sup>, Hui Geng<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*College of Foreign Studies, Guilin University of Electronic Technology, Guangxi, China*

<sup>2</sup>*College of Foreign Studies, Guilin University of Technology, Guangxi, China*

**\*Corresponding author:** Hui Geng,  
Email: [huiyuqiankun@gmail.com](mailto:huiyuqiankun@gmail.com)

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