

# Disruptions

## Call for an International Symposium

Disruptions allow and provide opportunities for new beginnings, fundamental reconsiderations, and the conceptualization of alternative directional approaches to education and training. They form a constitutive part of growing up, socialization, and education. The basic dialectical tone and the colorful metaphors used in the context of disruptions, upheavals, breakthroughs, collapses, or new departures point, not least, to the fundamental anthropological issue of a fragile existence. Not only does the notion of the human fragment testify to this, but so does the phenomenon of the breakthrough as an elementary gain of knowledge along the fault lines of experience. Both in individual life courses and in the context of organizational or societal developmental processes, rifts mark disruptive changes. The dynamics of such societal and cultural transformations, technological innovations, political upheavals, or increasing diversifications of educational and professional careers require pedagogical actors to deal with such breaks, discontinuities, and transitions.

In educational theory formation and historiography, methodological perspectives, and pedagogical fields of action, disruptions may take on diverse forms. The topic of the 30<sup>th</sup> Congress of the German Educational Research Association thus allows for different approaches from all sections of educational science: for example, performative or institutional disruptions could be examined, or social inequalities and risk factors could be emphasized.

The vastness of the research field surrounding this topic is apparent in the variability in interpretations and the implicit evaluations of the term in the context of developmental and educational processes: educational careers rarely take a linear course; rather, they are marked by crisis-like upheavals, disruptions, or the breaking-out of institutionally pre-structured life course patterns. From the perspective of learning theories, one has to expect motivational disruptions and crises caused, for example, by factors of stress and insecurity, which, at the same time, provide special opportunities for learning and individual development.

Thus, from an educational perspective, disruptions not only pose inherent challenges but also point to a decidedly positive and – for pedagogical thinking – indispensable dimension. The evaluation of disruptions in this context always remains bound to actor-related perspectives that change over time. Essential new approaches in educational and pedagogical thinking, as well as ideological and institutional processes of change, are also to be seen as responses to historical challenges or problems that ought to be overcome through reform or visionary alternative concepts aimed at a better future. Disruption, as the detachment from what has been achieved so far, is also always the driving force behind every development. Individual developments are questioned due to crises and thus allow for the formation of new and “updated” identities.

With the topic of this congress, we aim not only to identify problems but also focus on necessary moments of transition which hold potential for innovation and the positive shaping of the future.

## Possible topic areas

The 30<sup>th</sup> GERA Congress, to be held in Munich will examine “disruptions” in educational science from a multidisciplinary perspective. Possible research questions and topic areas include, but are not limited to:

1. **Educational biographies and their disruptions:** For individual development throughout the lifespan and the constitution of a personal identity, transitions, crises and the successful overcoming of such crises are essential constitutive factors. They provide opportunities for shaping one's biography but also highlight structural limitations to the ability to shape one's life course beyond what is considered to be a normal biography. What do biographical disruptions mean for individuals, and what are their implications for equality of opportunities and participation? How can they be examined empirically and compensated for through pedagogical intervention? In this context, the entire lifespan - from childhood through adolescence to old age - needs to be considered from an educational point of view, in order to improve educational chances and well-being across generations within the framework of inclusive and participatory approaches.
2. **Digital transformation and its consequences for the educational system:** In the digital age, the effects of digitalization on all areas of the educational system are often experienced as disruptions. Developments in artificial intelligence, in particular, challenge personal values, competences and qualifications, and aspirations - or even entire careers. To look at chances and risks of an often short-lived evolution in digitalization also means to become aware of one's own situatedness as researchers, to constantly feel estranged from usually proven methods and concepts and to improve them, whenever possible, through digital media. Which perspectives open up through the digital transformation with regard to pedagogical acting? What does this mean for the shaping and organization of teaching-learning situations and interactions? How can individuals be prepared to engage effectively with technologies?
3. **Disruptions in pedagogical institutions and the professionalization of pedagogical experts:** The huge lack of experts in many areas of the educational system endangers the quality of professional action in at least two respects: on the one hand, pedagogical concepts may not be implemented according to required standards due to insufficient resources; on the other hand, de-professionalization in pedagogical organizations and institutions looms as qualitative requirements are not met. This becomes apparent in the current debate on the lack of teachers in our school system, in particular. Simultaneously, demands on qualified professionals increase continuously, for example due to increasing numbers of children learning German as a second language. What are the causes for this, and what could appropriate responses look like? What other disruptions will pedagogical professionals be confronted with in the context of their initial, advanced and further training? How can breaks and disruptions in the educational, but also the academic career (e.g. precarious conditions of employment during phases of qualification) be topicalized and softened from a basic theoretical, didactical, historical, education-political or school- and organization-pedagogical perspective? How are disruptions reflected in organizations working in child and youth welfare services?
4. **Education-philosophical, anthropological, and phenomenological dimensions:** Processes of education and training are inseparably linked to tensions and breaks because they unfold within an ever more complex and dynamic field of social change and contradictory expectations. How can possible obstacles, disruptions, or experiences of failure be reflected theoretically and made visible as important issues? Which links, new discoveries, or re-readings are made possible by a basically fractured and thus life-world-oriented reflection on

education and training? Since breaks often point to socially constructed structures, attributions, or the normativity of theoretical assumptions and definitions, the question arises as to how these could be broken up or transcended within the framework of a post-structuralist approach or an approach that remains critical of ideologies. What can theories contribute to the pedagogical study of disruptions and what possible focal points might they entail?

5. **Sociopolitical dimension:** The consequences of global problems such as climate change, pandemics, or war and refugee migration entail ever more often political radicalization and the strengthening of authoritarian systems. These changes, which can also be experienced as disruptions, may have drastic effects also on the individual level. Educational institutions are directly affected by this and are at the same time being addressed as problem solvers. How do social disruptions and conflicts that arise through inequality, discrimination, or political division influence our perception of society and of the educational and scientific system? What can educational science contribute to the handling of current social challenges? Which approaches (e.g. intercultural education, research on migration, education for sustainable development, educational sociology) help provide answers to current sociopolitical questions and which education-political answers can be deduced from the diverse research results?
6. **Discipline politics and science studies:** Disruptions are a constant factor not only in individual biographies but also in the history of pedagogical ideas and theories – be it due to breaks in traditions of thought and research, changes in paradigms, disruptions in or the breaking out of research communities, the fragmented passing on of a body of methods and theories, or a fundamental re-orientation within the different disciplines. The handling of breaks in itself can also bring forth new frictions (e.g. a language sensitive to differences). How can such disruptions be assessed from the perspective of science history? Which present disruptions characterize the discipline (e.g. reclassifications and changes in denomination, the exodus of expert knowledge into other disciplines)?

In view of the discernibly large breadth of possible approaches and the interconnectedness of disruptions on diverse levels, we encourage members from all sections of the expert association to submit theoretical, historical, didactical, or empirical contributions. Interdisciplinary and international perspectives are especially welcome.

## Submission deadline

August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025

## Contribution format

The GERA aims to fund a symposium from low-GDP countries (see: [LOW GDP Countries](#)). A symposium (120 min) that is formed by lecturers who are members of the World Education Research Association (WERA) and who come exclusively from low-GDP countries may be submitted by WERA members.

If more than one symposium meeting the funding criteria is submitted and positively evaluated by the program committee, the executive board of the GERA will make the final funding decision.

## Instructions on how to apply

- An encasing abstract must be submitted. This abstract should describe the concept linking the individual contributions within your format. A maximum of 4,000 characters (including blank spaces) is allowed for this abstract.
- For the individual contributions to the symposium, a maximum of 1,500 characters (including blank spaces) is allowed. This information may be added to the encasing abstract.
- Please send your contribution with a budget plan (travel expenses)
- Contributions must be submitted on time by email ([b.schmidt@edu.lmu.de](mailto:b.schmidt@edu.lmu.de)) by August 31st, 2025, 11:59 pm (GMT +1).
- All lecturers must register as participants for the Congress and submit their contributions starting in October 2025.

## Contact

If you have questions, feel free to contact our congress office any time (contact person: Sabrina Grunau). Please note that our office is only staffed half-days and it may possibly take some time to answer your question.

**E-Mail:** [dgfe2026@edu.lmu.de](mailto:dgfe2026@edu.lmu.de)