

# Introduction

The academic community has been deeply affected by the news of the tragic consequences of the shooting at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University on 21 December 2023. This brutal act motivated by a perverted desire for revenge against society is unusual and cannot be excused in any way. The trust in the institution has been shaken, academic freedom has been abused in a despicable manner that is unprecedented in the history of Czech universities. The editors of e-Pedagogium join in the expressions of condolences with deep regret.

This tragedy forces us to think deeply about the safety of our educational institutions and how we can better protect our students and academics. At the same time, it is important for us to remember that this act must not undermine the fundamental principles of academic freedom and openness that are central to the universities.

Revenge on society by ruining innocent human lives is an unforgivable manifestation of an exaggerated egoism that goes beyond the limits of humanity. If we could, and it must be said that we should, reflect on whether such acts of aggression can be prevented at all, we would conclude that we are ultimately incapable of doing so through education. Even more terrible is the realisation that it is not possible to ensure prevention always and everywhere, that it is not possible to detect the long-hidden motives for such violent acts. All measures and interventions have their limits; it is not possible to always predict pathology in the actions of individuals and in all circumstances.

It must also be realistically acknowledged that education itself has its limits and in such extreme cases cannot prevent the development of pathological behaviour or thinking. Profoundly psychologically disturbed people may be resistant to educational interventions and their behaviour may be influenced by factors that are beyond the reach of standard educational interventions. While this knowledge can have a demotivating effect, we should not resign ourselves to being discouraged in our efforts to provide quality and effective education. On the contrary, we should seek effective approaches and interventions for pedagogy in closer collaboration with professionals in the fields of psychology and psychiatry.

However, the role of education is defined comprehensively and not only as an effort to prevent extreme cases of pathological behaviour. It is primarily an effort to cultivate the individual as a valid part of society, and to try to create an environment where the likelihood of such extreme acts of violence leading to similar tragic events is reduced.

It is necessary for academics, educators and researchers to constantly seek ways to prevent such tragedies. Interdisciplinary research in education and related fields can contribute to a better understanding of the factors that lead to the manifestation of violence, as well as to the development of more effective prevention strategies.

In these difficult times, we need to come together as an academic community to support each other. It is imperative that we work together to find ways to prevent similar tragedies in the future without limiting the freedom and openness that are so important. Interdisciplinary research in pedagogy can play a key role in finding solutions. We can use insights from psychology, sociology, safety studies, and other disciplines to develop a comprehensive approach to safety in higher education. At the same time, it is important to focus on prevention, early identification of risk factors and providing appropriate support to students and staff who need it. This tragedy also reminds us of the importance of ethics in research and teaching. We need to think about how we can better instil ethical values in our students and how we can ensure that academic knowledge is used only for the benefit of society.

Education plays a vital role not only in passing and gaining knowledge but above all in shaping the character, values and ethical behaviour of individuals. It is therefore important for academics, teachers, researchers and other educators to rethink approaches and methods in education to better respond to the challenges of our time, focusing on the development of empathy, critical thinking and the ability to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way.

At the same time, more emphasis needs to be placed on the emotional intelligence and psychological resilience of students. Education should lead to an understanding of the value of human life, respect for diversity and awareness of the consequences of our actions. In this context, an interdisciplinary approach to education is crucial, as it allows us to comprehensively grasp the complexity of the human psyche and social relations.

In the upcoming issues of e-Pedagogium, we would like to focus on topics related to safety in educational institutions, violence prevention and mental health promotion in academic settings, among others. We need to focus on creating a safer and more supportive environment at our educational institutions without limiting the academic freedom and openness that are the foundation of our educational system.

We would like to invite our readers and contributors to actively participate in this important discussion with their research and opinions. We believe that by working together, we can contribute to preventing similar tragedies in the future and to preserving academia as a place of free thinking, learning, and growth for future generations. For the academic community, this means finding the strength and building on the

reflection of this painful experience in our commitment to work together to create a safe, inclusive, and quality learning environment for the 21st century. At the same time, we believe in the power and effect of education and research efforts as tools for creating a safer society.

With deepest condolences.

Editors