



23rd ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE BULGARIAN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETY (BCES)
HOSTED BY YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

PROGRAM & ABSTRACT BOOK



24-27 September 2025
Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

BULGARIAN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETY (BCES)

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Online version

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Yeditepe University Faculty of Education

İnönü Mah. Kayışdağı Cad. 326A

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Türkiye

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Education at a Crossroads

23rd BCES Conference Program & Abstract Book 2025

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Conference Committees

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Research Assist. Işıl Yalçın Kolan, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

Introduction to the Program & Abstract Book

We are delighted to present the *Program & Abstract Book* of the 23rd Annual International Conference of the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES), hosted by the prestigious Yeditepe University Faculty of Education in the magnificent city of İstanbul, Türkiye, from September 24 to 27, 2025. Under the compelling theme *Education at a Crossroads*, this Conference brings together leading scholars, policymakers, educators, and researchers from around the world to engage in critical discussions on the transformative power of education in an era of unprecedented change.

A Conference of Global Significance

Education stands at a pivotal stage, shaped by rapid technological advancements, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and evolving societal needs. The BCES 2025 Conference serves as a dynamic platform for exploring how education systems worldwide can navigate these challenges while fostering innovation, equity, and sustainability. With eight thought-provoking thematic sections, the Conference delves into the most pressing issues in contemporary education, offering diverse perspectives and evidence-based solutions.

Yeditepe University: A Beacon of Excellence in Education

We are honored to hold our esteemed event at Yeditepe University, a leading institution renowned for its commitment to academic excellence, cutting-edge research, and global engagement. Located in the vibrant metropolis of İstanbul—a city that bridges continents and cultures—Yeditepe University's Faculty of Education stands as a pillar of innovation in teacher training, pedagogical research, and interdisciplinary scholarship. Yeditepe's dedication to fostering intellectual growth aligns seamlessly with the mission of BCES, making it the ideal setting for this year's Conference. Participants will benefit from the university's state-of-the-art facilities, its vibrant academic community, and its tradition of hosting high-impact international forums. The collaboration between BCES and Yeditepe University underscores a shared vision: to advance education as a force for global progress.

Exploring the Conference Theme

The BCES 2025 Conference is structured around eight thematic sections, each addressing critical dimensions of education in the 21st century:

1. Comparative and International Education – Examining global trends, policies, and cross-cultural insights in education systems.
2. International Education Issues – Analyzing challenges such as access, equity, and globalization in education.
3. Preschool and School Education: Policies & Practices – Highlighting transformative approaches in K-12 education.
4. Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training – Discussing the future of universities and educator preparation.
5. Law and Education – Exploring the intersection of legal frameworks and educational rights.

6. Wellbeing in the School Ecosystem – Addressing mental health, inclusivity, and supportive learning environments.
7. Sustainability in Education – Integrating environmental and social responsibility into curricula.
8. Teaching and Learning Experiences and AI – Investigating the impact of artificial intelligence on pedagogy.

Each section features groundbreaking research, interactive workshops, and panel discussions designed to inspire new ideas and foster international collaboration.

A Gathering of Minds: Why This Conference Matters

The BCES 2025 Conference is more than an academic event—it is a catalyst for change. In a world where education systems face mounting pressures—from digital disruption to socio-economic inequalities—this Conference provides a vital space for dialogue, innovation, and actionable strategies.

Participants will:

- Engage with world-renowned experts in comparative and international education.
- Discover cutting-edge research on AI, sustainability, and wellbeing in schools.
- Network with policymakers, educators, and researchers from diverse cultural and institutional backgrounds.
- Gain insights into best practices that can be adapted to local and global contexts.

İstanbul: A City of Inspiration

Hosting this Conference in İstanbul—a city where history and modernity converge—adds a unique dimension to the experience. As a cultural and intellectual hub, İstanbul embodies the spirit of cross-cultural exchange, making it the perfect backdrop for discussions on global education. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the city's rich heritage, vibrant academic life, and dynamic atmosphere, further enriching their conference journey.

Looking Ahead: The Impact of BCES 2025

As we stand at the crossroads of educational transformation, the insights generated at this Conference will resonate far beyond its conclusion. The research presented, the partnerships formed, and the ideas exchanged will contribute to shaping more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable education systems worldwide.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all participants for their contributions to this landmark event. Together with thought-provoking presentations, fruitful discussions, and stimulating ideas, we are paving the way for a brighter future in education.

Welcome to BCES 2025—where knowledge meets action, and where education research's next great episode begins.

BCES 2025

Thematic Sections

1. Comparative and International Education

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Charl Wolhuter, North-West University, South Africa

2. International Education Issues

Section Chair: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zacharias Louw de Beer, North-West University, South Africa

3. Preschool and School Education: Policies & Practices

Section Chair: Dr. Gillian L. S. Hilton, University of West London and BFWG, United Kingdom

4. Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. James Ogunleye, Academy of Innovation & Management, United Kingdom

5. Law and Education

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland

6. Wellbeing in the School Ecosystem

Section Chair: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşen Köse Şirin, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

7. Sustainability in Education

Section Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr. Onur Seçkin, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

8. Teaching and Learning Experiences and AI

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

The conference will take place at Yeditepe University, in the Rectorate Building, located on the left after the uphill entrance to the campus.

Added Features

Keynote Presentation

Wednesday, 24 September 2025 | Rectorate Building | Floor 5 | Blue Hall | 10:30 – 12:00 (approx.)

Educational Leadership at a Crossroads: Integrating an Adaptive Leadership Framework to Address the Challenges Faced by Education in the Second Half of the 21st Century

Keynote Speaker: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ricardo Lozano, Texas A&M International University, USA

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Workshop

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Rectorate Building | Floor 5 | Blue Hall | 17:30 – 18:30

Research Ethics and Integrity Practices in a Changing Educational Landscape

Workshop Presenter: Prof. Dr. James Ogunleye (Director, AIM London – the Academy of Innovation & Management, London, UK)

How to Cite Presentations and Abstracts

Follow these examples:

Oral presentation:

Beckmann, J. (2025). Education at a Crossroads: The Crossroads Phenomenon and Factors Impacting Crossroads Decisions [Presentation]. 23rd BCES Annual International Conference, *Education at a Crossroads*, İstanbul, Türkiye.

Published abstract:

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PROGRAM

Overall Conference Program

Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Time	Event Place	
09:00 – 10:00	Registration & Coffee/tea Rectorate Building Floor 5	
10:00 – 12:00	Conference Opening Rectorate Building Floor 5 Blue Hall (Immediately followed by the Keynote Presentation)	
	Keynote Presentation Floor 5 Blue Hall Educational Leadership at a Crossroads: Integrating an Adaptive Leadership Framework to Address the Challenges Faced by Education in the Second Half of the 21 st Century Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ricardo Lozano (Texas A&M International University, USA)	
12:00 – 12:30	Assemble for a group photo on the stairs in front of the Rectorate Building	
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch Social Facilities Building (Sosyal Tesisler) Entrance level	
14:00 – 15:30	Thematic Section 1 Floor 5 Blue Hall	Thematic Section 3 Floor 5 Green Hall
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Rectorate Building Floor 5	
16:00 – 17:30	Thematic Section 1 Floor 5 Blue Hall	Thematic Section 3 Floor 5 Green Hall
17:30 – 18:30	Thematic Section 1 Floor 5 Blue Hall Comparative Discussion Panel: School Counselors' Autonomy and Control	
19:00 – 21:00	Welcome dinner "Sofra" restaurant Social Facilities Building (Sosyal Tesisler) Floor 1	

Thursday, 25 September 2025

Time	Blue Hall	Green Hall
09:00 – 10:30	Thematic Section 2	Thematic Section 3
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5	
11:00 – 12:30	Thematic Section 2	Thematic Section 7
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch Social Facilities Building (Sosyal Tesisler) Entrance level	
14:00 – 15:30	Thematic Section 6	Thematic Section 4
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5	

16:00 – 18:30	Thematic Section 1	Thematic Section 4
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Friday, 26 September 2025

Time	Blue Hall	Green Hall
09:00 – 10:30	Thematic Section 2	Thematic Section 6
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5	
11:00 – 12:30	Thematic Section 5	Thematic Section 8
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch Social Facilities Building (Sosyal Tesisler) Entrance level	
14:00 – 15:30	Thematic Section 4	Thematic Section 8
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5	
16:00 – 17:30	Thematic Section 4	Thematic Section 3
17:30 – 18:30	Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Workshop Blue Hall Research Ethics and Integrity Practices in a Changing Educational Landscape Workshop Presenter: Prof. Dr. James Ogunleye (Director, AIM London – the Academy of Innovation & Management, London, UK)	
18:30 – 19:00	Conference Closing Blue Hall	
19:00 – 21:00	Farewell Party	

Saturday, 27 September 2025

Saturday, 27 September, is a free day with no scheduled sessions. This day is for exploring the local sights or for personal travel.

List of Registered Participants

Name	Title / Degree	Institution, Country
Aikaterini Sklavenitou	PhD Candidate	University of Crete, Greece
Alberto G. Canen	Prof. Dr.	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Amelia Molina García	Prof. Dr.	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, México
Ana Ivenicki	Emeritus Prof. Dr.	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
André du Plessis	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	University of Pretoria, South Africa
Anela Nikčević-Milković	Prof. Dr.Sc.	University of Zadar, Croatia
Aydın Kaan Şenel	M.A.	TEDMEM, Turkish Education Association
Ayşe Duran Yılmaz	Dr. Öğr. Üyes	Adıyaman University, Türkiye
Ayşen Köse Şirin	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Betül Çolak	Dr.	Istanbul Nisantasi University, Türkiye
Blerina Çibukçiu	PhD Candidate	Kosovo
Çağla Banko-Bal	Assist. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Candice Ceronio	MEd	North-West University, South Africa
Carlo Daniels	Dr.	University of South Africa, South Africa
Celestin Mayombe	Dr.	North-West University, South Africa

Name	Title / Degree	Institution, Country
Cem Aksiner	M.A.	Okan University, Türkiye
Charl Wolhuter	Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Chinyere Uchenna Ordu	Dr.	Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School Eledenwo. Nigeria
Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez	Prof. Dr.	Universidad de Guadalajara, México
Coenraad Jurgens	Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Deniz Ayşe Orun Taneli	PhD Candidate	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Deniz Sarıbaş	Doç. Dr.	Türkiye
Deon Vos	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Ekaterina Mishustina	PhD Candidate	East China Normal University, China
Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu	Prof. Dr.	Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland
Evrım Eveyik-Aydın	Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Fadil Biraimah	Mr.	Los Angeles Police Department, USA
Francisco Flores-Cuevas	Dr.	CU de la Costa University of Guadalajara, Mexico
Gergana Sakarski	Dr.	BCES, Bulgaria
Gillian L. S. Hilton	Dr.	University of West London, United Kingdom
Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu	Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Gordana Stankovska	Prof. Dr.	International Balkan University, Republic of North Macedonia

Name	Title / Degree	Institution, Country
Hatice Uslu Kocabaş	PhD Candidate	Marmara University, Türkiye
Irem Altinkalp	Mgr.	Charles University, Czech Republic
Işılray Kolan	Research Assistant	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
James Ogunleye	Prof. Dr.	Academy of Innovation & Management, United Kingdom
Johan Beckmann	Prof. Dr.	University of the Free State, South Africa
JP Rossouw	Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Judith Elizabeth Vos	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Julia Correia	M.Ed.	North-West University, South Africa
Juliana Maria Smith	Prof. Dr.	University of the Western Cape, South Africa
Kalina Popova	M.Ed.	BCES Secretary, Bulgaria
Karen L. Biraimah	Prof. Dr.	University of Central Florida, USA
Kathrin Franziska Beck	Prof. Dr.	Katholische Stiftungshochschule München, Germany
Kemoneilwe Metsing	Dr.	University of South Africa, South Africa
Lina Mmakgabo Methi	Dr.	University of South Africa, South Africa
Mariana Segura Molina	Student	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México
Marius Smit	Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Matjhabedi Mazibuko	Dr.	Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

Name	Title / Degree	Institution, Country
MC Rossouw	Dr.	Independent, South Africa
Meltem İpek Öner	Assist. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Merve Oflaz	Dr.	Medipol University, Türkiye
Molly Fuller	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Mustafa Ramazan	Dr.	McGill University, Canada
Naruho Ezaki	Dr.	Aichi Shukutoku University, Japan
Nesreen Saleh Mohamed Salah El-Din	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
Nikolaos Neveskiotis	PhD Candidate	University of Crete, Greece
Nikolay Popov	Prof. Dr.habil.	Sofia University, Bulgaria
Nives Markun Puhan	Senior Consultant	National Education Institute, Slovenia
Nonhlanhla Maseko	Prof. Dr.	University of South Africa, South Africa
Oliver Tafadzwa Gore	Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Onur Seçkin	Asist. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Öykü Erinç Küçüköz	PhD Student	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Pelin Sidal	Research Assistant	Yeditepe University, Türkiye
Queen Chioma Nworgu	PhD Scholar	London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
Ricardo Lozano	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Texas A&M International University, USA

Name	Title / Degree	Institution, Country
Richie Rizkalla Elian	PhD Student	ELTE University, Hungary
Serdar K�r�k	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, T�rkiye
Shabana Shamaas Gul Khattak	Dr.	SOAS, University of London, United Kingdom
Sharon Thabo Mampane	Prof. Dr.	University of South Africa, South Africa
Silvia Don�evov	Assist. Prof. Dr.	Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia
Őpela Bergo�	Senior Consultant	National Education Institute, Slovenia
Őura Tekin	Instructor	Nigde Omer Halisdemir University, T�rkiye
Tafadzwa Ruzive	Dr.	University of the Free State, South Africa
Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu	Dr.	Ernst & Young LLP, United Kingdom
Velaphi Aaron Nhlapo	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Yelkin Diker CoŐkun	Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, T�rkiye
Zacharias Louw de Beer	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	North-West University, South Africa
Zuhar Rende Berman	Assist. Prof. Dr.	Yeditepe University, T�rkiye

Thematic Sections Program

Thematic Section 1. Comparative and International Education

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Charl Wolhuter, North-West University, South Africa

Wednesday, 24 September 2025, Blue Hall

14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 1.1	Education at the Crossroads: Comparative and International Education to Show the Way? Charl Wolhuter
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 1.2	Exploring the Impact of Assessment Practices on Science Literacy: A Comparative HLM Study of Türkiye and Canada in PISA Hatice Uslu Kocabaş & İlker Cırık
15:00 – 15:30 Pres. 1.3	Future-Proofing International Baccalaureate Learners: Curriculum Implications from the WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025 Meltem İpek Öner, Melike Bektaş, Filiz Işık
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5
16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 1.4	Linking Physical Resources to School Effectiveness: A Comparative Analysis between Schools from Different Quintiles Kwanele Mayisela & Velaphi Aaron Nhlapo
16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 1.5	Vocational Education Development Trajectory in Russia and China Ekaterina Mishustina & Nicholas Sun-Keung Pang [Presenter: Ekaterina Mishustina]
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 1.6	Comparative Analysis of HSEE and PISA Mathematics Items: Cognitive Requirements and Levels Işıl Kolan
17:30 – 18:30 Pres. 1.7	Comparative Discussion Panel: School Counselors' Autonomy and Control, based on the paper by Nikolay Popov & Vera Spasenović, "A Nine-Country Comparison of School Counselors' Autonomy and Control" Presenter & Moderator: Nikolay Popov Discussants: Nilüfer Şehriban Özabacı, Serdar Körük, Zeynep Pekin, Pınar Aylin Yırtıcı, Simay Vapurlu Şimşek, Ayşe Duran Yılmaz, Blerina Çibukçiu, Candice Ceronio, Chinyere Uchenna Ordu, Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Gillian L. S. Hilton, Gordana Stankovska, İrem Didem Saygan, Johan Beckmann, Katerina Mishustina, Kemoneilwe Metsing, Lina Mmakgabo Methi, Matjhabedi Mazibuko, Nives Markun Puhon, Nonhlanhla Maseko, Ricardo Lozano, Tafadzwa Ruzive, Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 1.8	Pedagogical Competence in Secondary Education: Challenges and Opportunities in France and Greece Aikaterini Sklavenitou
16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 1.9	Impact of Different Types of Disasters on Children's Schooling Status: Focusing on the M7.8 Earthquake and COVID-19 in Nepal Naruho Ezaki
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 1.10	Bridging Classrooms across Borders: A Mixed-Methods Inquiry into Classroom Management Practices in Indian Educational Contexts Merve Oflaz & Yelkin Diker Coşkun
17:30 – 18:00 Pres. 1.11	The Incomplete Quilt: A Pick and Choose Patchwork of Disability Laws and Regulations—A Comparative and Critical Review of Special Education Services in the Turkish and U.S. Contexts Zuhar Rende Berman & Millard L. S. Berman
18:00 – 18:30 Pres. 1.12	Teaching Logic in the French School System Richie Rizkalla Elian

Thematic Section 2. International Education Issues

Section Chair: Assoc. Prof. Zacharias Louw de Beer, North-West University, South Africa

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

09:00 – 09:30 Pres. 2.1	Education at a Crossroads: The Crossroads Phenomenon and Factors Impacting Crossroads Decisions Johan Beckmann
09:30 – 10:00 Pres. 2.2	Education at a Crossroads: Competencies for Sustainable and Future-Oriented Educational Leadership André du Plessis
10:00 – 10:30 Pres. 2.3	Enhancing Teacher Global Competence through Equitable Global South-North Partnerships: A Botswana Case Study Karen L. Biraimah, Agreement L. Jotia & Brianna A. Kurtz [Presenter: Karen L. Biraimah]
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5
11:00 – 11:30 Pres. 2.4	Analyzing Policy Limitations in Ensuring Learner Safety in Technology Education Environments Coenraad Jurgens & Zacharias Louw de Beer

11:30 – 12:00 Pres. 2.5	Not Everything That Counts Can Be Counted: Rethinking the Influence of Leadership Programmes Molly Fuller
12:00 – 12:30 Pres. 2.6	The Promotion of Critical Language Awareness Teaching in the Language Classroom Nadine Fouché-Karsten & Judith Elizabeth Vos [Presenter: Judith Elizabeth Vos]

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

09:00 – 09:30 Pres. 2.7	The Influence of Science and Technology on the Foundation Phase Policies of the BRICS Associate Countries: A Comparative Study Julia Correia, Deon Vos & Zacharias Louw de Beer
09:30 – 10:00 Pres. 2.8	Unveiling Student Identity: Understanding and Nurturing the Student of the 21 st Century Matjhabedi Mazibuko & Nonhlanhla Maseko
10:00 – 10:30 Pres. 2.9	Importance of Sustainably Maximizing the Research Capacity of Academic Practitioners: Voices from the Global Academic Arena Carlo Daniels [Pre-recorded presentation]

Thematic Section 3. Preschool and School Education: Policies & Practices

Section Chair: Dr. Gillian L. S. Hilton, University of West London and BFWG, United Kingdom

Wednesday, 24 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 3.1	Where Have All the Teachers Gone and Why? How Can the World Encourage More People to Join the Profession, or Has the Cause Already Been Lost? Gillian L. S. Hilton
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 3.2	Risk Management in Addressing the Duty of Care in Mechanical Technology Workshops Coenraad Jurgens
15:00 – 15:30 Pres. 3.3	Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Quo Vadis? JP Rossouw & MC Rossouw
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5
16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 3.4	The Impact of Constructivist Learning Environment on Students' Motivation in Primary School Blerina Çibukçiu

16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 3.5	Cultivating Life Skills in the Greek School System: The Challenge of the “21+ Skills Labs” through the Lens of PISA Nikolaos Neveskiotis
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 3.6	The Challenges that Secondary School Teachers Experience in Practicing Philosophies of Teaching and Learning in Their Classrooms in South Africa Bianca Williams & Celestin Mayombe [Prerecorded presentation]

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

09:00 – 09:30 Pres. 3.7	Extended School Program in Slovenian Primary Education Špela Bergoč & Nives Markun Puhan
09:30 – 10:00 Pres. 3.8	Exploring Core Competencies in Omani Schools: Principals' Perceptions and Their Role in Enhancing School Performance Nesreen Saleh Mohamed Salah El-Din & Fathi M. Abunaser
10:00 – 10:30 Pres. 3.9	The Educational Policy of the New Mexican School Concerning Human Rights Amelia Molina García, Mariana Segura Molina & Christian I. Ponce Crespo

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 3.10	Empowering Learners: The Role of Project-Based Learning in Overcoming English Proficiency Challenges Candice Ceronio, Shantha Naidoo & Andri Schoonen
16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 3.11	Pioneering Progressive Educators in Turkey: Ayşe Sıdıka, Ömer Adil and Tevfik Fikret Seyfi Kenan & Şüra Tekin
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 3.12	Analysis of Theories of Language and Communication at the Preschool Level Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez, Francisco Flores-Cuevas, Felipe-Anastacio González-González, Luz-Maria Zuñiga-Medina, Graciela-Esperanza Giron-Villacis, Irma-Carolina Gonzalez-Sanchez, Joaquin Torres-Mata & José Venegas-Vazquez [Presenters: Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez & Francisco Flores-Cuevas]

Thematic Section 4. Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. James Ogunleye, Academy of Innovation & Management, United Kingdom

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 4.1	Controlling Student Numbers: The Challenge of Managing Exponential Growth in University Admissions in Nigeria – An Update James Ogunleye
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 4.2	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) of Two Higher Education Systems for Refugee Youth: Turkey and Spain Irem Altinkalp
15:00 – 15:30 Pres. 4.3	Emotional Intelligence, Learning Motivation, and Social-Emotional Learning among University Students Gordana Stankovska, Dimitar Dimitrovski, Fatime Ziberi & Tatjana Takasmanova
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5
16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 4.4	Education In-between Men's Antagonism and Women's Protagonism Shabana Shamaas Gul Khattak
16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 4.5	Attitudes of Child Development Associate Degree Students Toward the Use of Technology in Education Ayşe Duran Yılmaz & Ebru Hasibe Tanju Aslışen [Presenter: Ayşe Duran Yılmaz]
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 4.6	Assessing the Preparedness of Lecturers and the Willingness of ECE Students to Integrate Academic E-portfolios in South African HEIs Tebogo Jillian Mampane & Sharon Thabo Mampane
17:30 – 18:00 Pres. 4.7	From Science Teacher to Research Supervisor: Science Teachers' Identity Constructions Through Supervising Student Research Projects Deniz Sarıbaş & Ertan Çetinkaya [Presenter: Deniz Sarıbaş]

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 4.8	Ignorance and the Role of Intellectuals: Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education and Teacher Education Alberto G. Canen & Ana Ivenicki
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 4.9	<i>Kuverengegwa</i> as an Organizing Principle of Higher Education Systems Tafadzwa Ruzive
15:00 – 15:30 Pres. 4.10	Developing Teacher-Researcher Identity through Participatory Action Research in a Teaching Practice Course Deniz Sarıbaş
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee/tea break Floor 5
16:00 – 16:30 Pres. 4.11	Contribution of Socio-Demographic Variables, Distant Learning Variables, Components of Self-Regulation of Learning, Personality Traits as Predictors in GPA, and Satisfaction with GPA as Criteria in Teacher Education Students Anela Nikčević-Milković, Darko Lončarić & Gabrijele Galko [Presenter: Anela Nikčević-Milković]

16:30 – 17:00 Pres. 4.12	Navigating Conflicting Feedback: Addressing Discrepancies in External Examiner Reports for Postgraduate Research Nonhlanhla Maseko & Matjhabedi Mazibuko
17:00 – 17:30 Pres. 4.13	Reflecting on the External Examination of Theses and Dissertations from Three South African Higher Education Institutions Juliana Maria Smith [Prerecorded presentation]

Thematic Section 5. Law and Education

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

11:00 – 11:30 Pres. 5.1	Evaluation of Organisational DEI Strategic Implementation of a London-based University Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu
11:30 – 12:00 Pres. 5.2	Assessing the Role of Education for Nigeria's Sustainable Economic Growth Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu & Chinyere Uchenna Ordu
12:00 – 12:30 Pres. 5.3	An Analysis of How International Students Engage in Social Media Platforms in Their Learning in UK Universities and the Benefits of Their Learning Experiences Queen Chioma Nworgu

Thematic Section 6. Wellbeing in the School Ecosystem

Section Chair: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşen Köse Şirin, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye
Acting Section Chair: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serdar Körük, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Blue Hall

14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 6.1	Education at a Crossroads: Current Challenges to School Counseling Nikolay Popov
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 6.2	Improving Wellbeing in Schools: The Role of School Social Work in Germany and the Necessity of Its Implementation in Türkiye Betül Çolak & Kathrin Franziska Beck
15:00 – 15:30 Pres. 6.3	Mental Wellbeing of Students in South African Universities: A Capabilities Approach Oliver Tafadzwa Gore [Prerecorded presentation]

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

09:00 – 09:30 Pres. 6.4	When the Mind Speaks Differently: Trauma, Neurodiversity, and the Psychology of Healing Kemoneilwe Metsing
09:30 – 10:00 Pres. 6.5	Child and Youth Care Workers' Advocacy for Foster Children with Academic Challenges Lina Mmakgabo Methi
10:00 – 10:30 Pres. 6.6	Aydın Kaan Şenel The Emotional Landscape of High-Stakes Testing: Insights from the Experiences of 8 th -Grade Students in Istanbul and Hatay

Thematic Section 7. Sustainability in Education

Section Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr. Onur Seçkin, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

Thursday, 25 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

11:00 – 11:30 Pres. 7.1	Present and Future of Lifelong Learning in Türkiye within the Framework of the 12th Development Plan (2024–2028) Onur Seçkin
11:30 – 12:00 Pres. 7.2	How Sustainability Concepts Are Embedded in the Maarif Educational Model Pelın Sidal & Yelkin Diker Coşkun
12:00 – 12:30 Pres. 7.3	Short Overview of Country Performance on Ecology and Sustainability Topics in TIMSS: Reflections on Curriculum Implementation Yelkin Diker Coşkun, Öykü Erinç Küçüköz & Deniz Ayşe Orun Taneli [Presenters: Öykü Erinç Küçüköz & Deniz Ayşe Orun Taneli]

Thematic Section 8. Teaching and Learning Experiences and AI

Section Chair: Prof. Dr. Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu, Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Türkiye

Friday, 26 September 2025 | Floor 5 | Green Hall

11:00 – 11:30 Pres. 8.1	The Effect of Artificial Intelligence-Supported Materials on Academic Achievement in English Teaching Cem Aksiner & Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu
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11:30 – 12:00 Pres. 8.2	Navigating Ethical Crossroads: How AI Ethics Shape OECD, UNESCO, International Baccalaureate, and Turkish National Curriculum Frameworks Meltem İpek Öner & İrem Didem Saygan
12:00 – 12:30 Pres. 8.3	Evaluation of Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Terms of Children's Rights Based on Parental Views Çağla Banko-Bal & Berrin Akman
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch Social Facilities Building (Sosyal Tesisler) Entrance level
14:00 – 14:30 Pres. 8.4	AI as Pedagogical Partner: Examining Pre-Service English Teachers' Reflections on Instructional Design Across Varying AI Integration Levels Evrım Eveyik-Aydın & Zeynep Koçoğlu
14:30 – 15:00 Pres. 8.5	Research Study on Rawan Online School (ROS): A Resilient Approach to Girls' Education in Afghanistan Mustafa Ramazan

Last-minute added presentation

To be scheduled onsite	Multilingual Education at a Crossroads: Global Insights and South Africa's Language-in-Education Policy Marius Smit
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ABSTRACT BOOK

Added Features

Keynote Abstract

Educational Leadership at a Crossroads: Integrating an Adaptive Leadership Framework to Address the Challenges Faced by Education in the Second Half of the 21st Century

Ricardo Lozano

The consequences of the recent unprecedented catastrophes experienced throughout the world have highlighted the fact that leadership, particularly in the context of education, has proven to be ineffective at dealing with the challenges faced by the world in the second half of the 21st century. In response to this concern, the adaptive leadership framework provides a viable model to address the current challenges faced by traditional models of leadership and education around the world. Adaptive leadership consists of guiding groups to confront complex challenges that necessitate a shift in fundamental beliefs, values, and, sometimes, identities. It addresses issues that cannot be solved with simple (technical) solutions. Adaptive leadership is about navigating change and complexity by fostering a collaborative environment where people can experiment, learn, and adapt to overcome significant (adaptive) challenges. The unique principles of the adaptive leadership framework make it an ideal tool to address the heart of the current challenges faced by traditional approaches to leadership and education, rather than providing superficial, unsustainable solutions to complex problems.

Keywords: leadership, education, educational leadership, adaptive leadership, leadership framework, adaptive challenges, 21st century



Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Workshop Abstract

Research Ethics and Integrity Practices in a Changing Educational Landscape

James Ogunleye

As education finds itself at a crossroads—shaped by rapid technological advancement, global pressures, and evolving academic norms—ensuring robust research ethics and integrity has never been more critical. This pre-conference CPD workshop is designed to provide participants with a practical and reflective understanding of the principles and practices that uphold ethical research in today's complex academic environment. The workshop begins by introducing key definitions and concepts related to research ethics, exploring both institutional frameworks (e.g., ethics committees, review boards) and the individual researcher's responsibilities. Participants will then examine how ethical considerations must evolve in response to emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), which pose new challenges around consent, authorship, and data transparency. Attention will then shift to research integrity, focusing on the principles that define responsible research conduct, including honesty, rigour, accountability, and transparency. Common violations of research integrity—such as data fabrication,

falsification, and unethical authorship practices—will be discussed alongside strategies for their prevention. A key section of the workshop addresses academic integrity, with a special focus on plagiarism, often considered the most prevalent and serious breach of ethical scholarship. Participants will explore the different forms plagiarism can take and learn practical strategies for avoiding it through proper citation, paraphrasing, and the use of detection tools. The session concludes by reflecting on how academic and research integrity intersect, and what these intersections mean for educators, supervisors, early-career researchers, and policymakers. In a time when the legitimacy of knowledge is increasingly questioned, this workshop reaffirms the critical role of ethics and integrity in sustaining public trust and scholarly excellence. This is an interactive CPD workshop, focusing more on imparting knowledge than on learning from participants' own experiences.

Keywords: research ethics, integrity practices, educational landscape, responsible research conduct



Thematic Section 1. Comparative and International Education

Abstract 1.1

Education at the Crossroads: Comparative and International Education to Show the Way?

Charl Wolhuter

This paper first surveys the momentous societal changes currently taking place worldwide. This new societal context has placed education at a crossroads, offering unprecedented opportunities and threats, but in any case, it means that momentous decisions regarding education will have to be made. In contemplating the changes in society and deciding on the responses in the education sector, Comparative and International Education as a field of scholarship is uniquely placed to guide society to make informed decisions by the very nature of its object of study and the purposes it pursues. However, to live up to its full potential, several changes in the field are imperative. These include developing a forward or future-looking orientation in the field, giving due attention to education systems per se as well as to the societal outcomes of education, moving away from the fixation on matters about theory and paradigms, and at the same time developing autochthonous theory, and dismantling Northern hegemony and let the Global South comes to its right.

Keywords: Comparative and International Education, Global South, Global North



Abstract 1.2

Exploring the Impact of Assessment Practices on Science Literacy: A Comparative HLM Study of Türkiye and Canada in PISA

Hatice Uslu Kocabaş & İlker Cırık

Using PISA 2022 data, this study compares the science literacy performance of Türkiye and Canada—two countries with Anglo-American-influenced curriculum traditions—based on their assessment practices. We employed hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) and applied the same best-fitting model to both national samples. At the school level, mandatory standardized tests do not significantly predict science scores in either country. Conversely, the use of non-mandatory standardized tests and teacher-developed assessments correlates positively with student performance in Türkiye, whereas this relationship is not significant in Canada. Teacher judgment assessments are negatively associated with science scores in both contexts, raising questions about their reliability and classroom utility. School type shows contrasting patterns: while public schools outperform private schools in Türkiye, the reverse is true in Canada. At the student level, being native-born and male predicts higher science achievement in Türkiye but not in Canada. Socioeconomic status remains a strong and consistent predictor in both

countries. Overall, the findings suggest that in curriculum systems where accountability has been criticized for potentially constraining teacher autonomy, heavy reliance on subjective assessments may undermine student achievement. Further research should examine how teachers construct evaluative judgments and whether these practices genuinely foster meaningful learning. Moreover, the contrast between Türkiye and Canada highlights structural differences in assessment cultures—particularly regarding school type and institutional accountability—and calls for closer scrutiny of PISA’s school-sampling strategy, which may shape cross-national interpretations of educational performance and equity.

Keywords: assessment practices, hierarchical linear modeling, PISA, science literacy, socioeconomic status, teacher judgement

This research is based on the doctoral dissertation of Hatice Uslu Kocabaş, supervised by Prof. Dr. İlker Cırık, and supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK), Project No. 224K245. The authors thank TÜBİTAK for their support.



Abstract 1.3

Future-Proofing International Baccalaureate Learners: Curriculum Implications from the WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025

Meltem İpek Öner, Melike Bektaş & Filiz Işık

This study examines the curriculum implications for future-proofing learners within the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, drawing on insights from the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Future of Jobs Report 2025. Utilizing qualitative document analysis, the research systematically compares key competencies identified by the WEF—including analytical thinking, digital literacy, creativity, and adaptability—with current curricular objectives and pedagogical strategies of the IB Diploma Programme. Grounded in the belief that learning how to learn is fundamental for students both within and beyond the school environment, IB's Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills aim to cultivate students as agentic, self-regulated learners. Findings indicate significant alignment in promoting critical thinking, creativity, communication skills, and adaptability. Additionally, the analysis specifically examines how the IB Diploma Programme integrates the IB's Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills, including thinking skills, communication skills, research skills, self-management skills, and social skills. Through implicit and explicit opportunities, ATL skills development within the IB curriculum supports students in becoming lifelong learners, enhancing their capacity for effective participation in diverse social and professional contexts. However, the study also identifies critical gaps, particularly in the explicit integration of advanced digital competencies, technological fluency, entrepreneurial mindsets, and sustainability awareness within the existing IB curriculum. To address these gaps and better equip IB learners for emerging global workforce demands, the study recommends curricular enhancements emphasizing digital literacy, technological skills, entrepreneurial education, and sustainability initiatives. These targeted improvements aim to comprehensively prepare IB learners to successfully navigate and thrive in future employment landscapes. The outcomes provide actionable insights for IB educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers committed to aligning educational practices with future-oriented skill requirements.

Keywords: Approaches to Learning (ATL), World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025, workforce skills, curriculum development



Abstract 1.4

Linking Physical Resources to School Effectiveness: A Comparative Analysis between Schools from Different Quintiles

Kwanele Mayisela & Velaphi Aaron Nhlapo

One of the pillars of school effectiveness is the proper management of a school's physical resources. The physical resources available in a school can directly impact both teaching effectiveness and student learning. Thus, managing schools' physical resources is a critical element of effective school management. According to the Gauteng Department of Education, school effectiveness falls within the purview of school governing bodies under the guidance of the principal. Although South African schools have different levels, volumes, and types of resources, most have at least a school yard, fences, gates, toilets, desks, chairs, blackboards, and buildings. However, some reports suggest that some schools have ineffective monitoring, management, and control mechanisms in place for even the most basic of physical resources. This phenomenological, qualitative study was undertaken to determine if there is a link between physical resources and school effectiveness in the KwaZulu-Natal province. A small non-representative sample of 10 secondary schools, five historically disadvantaged (quintiles 1 to 3) and five more affluent schools (quintiles 4 and 5), was purposively selected for participation. The study is underpinned by the Contingency theory of Mintzberg, established in 1979. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the results. A key finding was that school principals and members of the school management team (SMT) may compromise effective management and maintenance of school physical resources in low quintile schools, while the more affluent or higher quintile schools seldom reported serious challenges with the management and maintenance of the physical resources.

Keywords: physical resources, historically disadvantaged communities, school facilities, school effectiveness, school management, school governance



Abstract 1.5

Vocational Education Development Trajectory in Russia and China

Ekaterina Mishustina & Nicholas Sun-Keung Pang

Russia and China are vast, non-homogeneous countries rich in history. Considering the similarities and differences in their development, it is interesting to see how they, with their hyperdiversity, respond to Western influences across time. The governments of both Russia and China today see the strategic importance of cooperation. Both countries prioritize education development for economic development in light of an increasingly changing and automated world, and are working towards vocational education development. This paper examines initiatives in vocational education development, reflects on unique philosophies and understanding of Russia and China in regards to vocational education, and illustrates

their experiences with 'dual system' and 'World Skills International'. By comparing Russia and China, it is evident that the Western culture, the Russian culture, and the Chinese culture are hyper diverse, and thus the development of vocational education follows a unique path. The study aspires to promote awareness, reflection, and further discussion between other countries across the globe in regards to their experiences in education development. This can promote learning from the experience of these two hyperdiverse countries and start a fresh and enriching conversation about educational reform and a better shared future.

Keywords: BRICS, China, Russia, vocational education and training, Western influence, World Skills International, dual model



Abstract 1.6

Comparative Analysis of HSEE and PISA Mathematics Items: Cognitive Requirements and Levels

Işılray Kolan

This study examines the alignment of mathematics items used in the High School Entrance Exam (HSEE) conducted in Türkiye with mathematical literacy proficiency levels identified for PISA. In line with curriculum reforms in 2018, the format and structure of HSEE have changed to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, shifting from rote memorization to higher-order cognitive abilities. However, the extent to which HSEE math items align with PISA's mathematical proficiency levels remains an open question. Using a qualitative research approach, this study employs document analysis to classify 140 HSEE mathematics items from 2018 to 2024 based on six proficiency levels described in PISA. Two mathematics educators independently coded the items and achieved 80% agreement on the levels. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and final decisions were made accordingly. Findings indicate that HSEE primarily includes a moderate level of mathematical proficiency, with the majority of items classified at Level 3. The presence of Level 1 and Level 2 questions fluctuated over the years, while Level 4 questions showed inconsistent patterns. Notably, no questions were identified at Level 5 or Level 6, indicating a lack of high-level problem-solving tasks aligned with international standards. These results suggest that while HSEE has integrated more analytical questions compared to previous standardized exams, it remains insufficient in assessing advanced mathematical literacy. To better align with PISA and foster higher-order thinking skills, HSEE should include more complex, real-world problem-solving questions that require students to apply their mathematical reasoning skills. Future reforms in the Turkish national mathematics curriculum and assessment framework should emphasize the development of students' higher-order thinking skills, including mathematical literacy, for international benchmarks.

Keywords: PISA, High School Entrance Exam, mathematics, proficiency levels



Abstract 1.7

A Nine-Country Comparison of School Counselors' Autonomy and Control

Nikolay Popov & Vera Spasenović

This paper is a result of Nikolay Popov and Vera Spasenović's ongoing efforts towards establishing a comparative research field called comparative school counseling studies, where comparative education methodological tools are used in researching school counseling worldwide. The purpose of the paper is to examine the relationship between the regulation of school-based counseling and the level of autonomy and control in the work of school counselors in nine European countries. The study focuses on the school counselor because this is the most multifunctional professional in school, with many variable tasks, a myriad of functions, and a large circle of contacts. A school counselor is expected to care about the mental, emotional, social, and academic development of students; to prevent them from various risks; to discover, diagnose, and understand the essence of problems students face; and to consult with students, parents, teachers, and other staff members in schools. This is a theoretical comparative school counseling study chiefly based on analysis of normative documents (laws, regulations, ordinances, instructions, and recommendations). The research methods used in the study are document analysis, comparative method, and generalization. Document analysis is used in this study as a qualitative research method for examining, classifying, and interpreting information. The following nine countries are included in the study: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Malta, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. The above-mentioned purpose of the paper is operationalized through: concisely presenting who the school counselor is; grouping the countries by the type of school system governance and the type of regulation of school counselors' work; discussing autonomy and control in the work of school counselors; making brief descriptions of the school counselor's functions in each country with short evaluations of the level of autonomy and control; and classifying school-based counseling functions according to their susceptibility to autonomy or control. As a final result of this study, Popov and Spasenović introduce a classification of school counselor autonomy-control status (SCACS). Presenting results of this first-ever conceptual comparative study of autonomy and control in the work of school-based counselors in some European countries, the paper contributes to the further development of the field of comparative school counseling studies.

Keywords: school counselor, autonomy, control, school system, comparative school counseling, school counselor autonomy-control status (SCACS)



Abstract 1.8

Pedagogical Competence in Secondary Education: Challenges and Opportunities in France and Greece

Aikaterini Sklavenitou

Teacher quality is a fundamental determinant of student success, influencing both cognitive and socio-emotional development. Research underscores the long-term impact of teachers on student outcomes and highlights their role in fostering social and emotional skills. Recognizing the critical importance of

teacher effectiveness, policymakers worldwide emphasize investments in teacher education, professional development, and well-being (OECD, 2021). This study examines the evolving landscape of teacher education policies, particularly in the context of Europe, with a focus on Greece and France. It explores through interviews and focus groups the shift towards integrating pedagogical theory with practical training, addressing concerns about the disconnection between research-based knowledge and classroom practice. A comparative analysis of Greece and France highlights key policy shifts, including the introduction of pedagogical certification programs and the restructuring of teacher education institutions. The findings reveal that while initial teacher training varies across national contexts, common challenges persist, such as balancing academic autonomy with pedagogical preparedness. In conclusion, the study underscores the necessity of continuous professional development and the refinement of teacher education programs to align with the demands of modern classrooms. Ensuring high-quality teacher training remains essential for equipping educators with the skills required to navigate evolving educational landscapes and meet the diverse needs of students.

Keywords: teacher education, pedagogical competence, students' achievement, school climate



Abstract 1.9

Impact of Different Types of Disasters on Children's Schooling Status: Focusing on the M7.8 Earthquake and COVID-19 in Nepal

Naruho Ezaki

In recent years, the world has experienced a growing number of conflicts and natural disasters that endanger lives. In such emergencies, normal protective support is disrupted, and existing problems such as social injustice and inequality tend to worsen. The damage is greater in countries and regions with inadequate prevention capacity, such as developing countries. Various reports have been published on the negative impact of conflict on the education sector in developing countries, primarily by international organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO. However, detailed studies on natural disasters are limited due to the difficulty of collecting data on such disasters immediately after their occurrence. Therefore, this study focused on Nepal, a country that suffered two disasters, the M7.8 earthquake in 2015 and the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, to compare the impact of these disasters on the schooling status of individual children. The target schools for this study were all public schools located in the suburbs of the Bhaktapur district. School records, such as student attendance registers, were collected from each target school, and principals and teachers were interviewed about individual children's attendance and transfers. As a result, attendance temporarily declined sharply after the earthquake, but within two months it had returned to normal levels. In contrast, during the period of the pandemic, there was a prolonged period of poor attendance, partly due to problems accessing the internet. Regarding school transfers, the major earthquake reduced the flow from public schools to private schools in search of a "quality education". Conversely, the flow from private schools to public schools increased. During the period of the pandemic, however, both types of flow increased. The details of this background will be presented at the conference.

Keywords: public school, private school, natural disaster, earthquake, COVID-19, educational disparities, developing countries, Nepal



Abstract 1.10

Bridging Classrooms across Borders: A Mixed-Methods Inquiry into Classroom Management Practices in Indian Educational Contexts

Merve Oflaz & Yelkin Diker Coşkun

Effective classroom management is crucial for promoting meaningful learning in diverse educational settings. It involves not only regulating behavior but also creating a structured, respectful, and inclusive environment that supports student engagement and teacher effectiveness. This study draws on insights from an educational tour in India, using a mixed-methods approach to examine classroom management practices across various subject areas. The completed qualitative phase included informal classroom observations and post-lesson reflections in primary and secondary schools, providing contextually grounded perspectives on how teachers navigate diverse learning environments. An upcoming quantitative phase will utilize the Classroom Management Scale developed by Metlilo and Yıldırım to assess teachers' perceived competencies in instructional flow, behavior management, and classroom organization. Preliminary qualitative findings reveal challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, multilingual student populations, and limited resources, all of which influence teachers' strategies. Cultural expectations and institutional dynamics also play a key role in shaping decision-making. The study emphasizes that effective management goes beyond discipline, requiring a learning climate built on mutual respect, clear expectations, and cultural sensitivity. It advocates for more adaptive and responsive classroom management frameworks and highlights the value of international observational experiences in enhancing teacher insight and pedagogical flexibility. Implications for teacher education, classroom-based research, and global collaboration are discussed.

Keywords: classroom management, teacher practices, teacher reflections, educational observation, Indian classrooms



Abstract 1.11

The Incomplete Quilt: A Pick and Choose Patchwork of Disability Laws and Regulations—A Comparative and Critical Review of Special Education Services in the Turkish and U.S. Contexts

Zuhar Rende Berman & Millard L. S. Berman

This presentation offers a comprehensive examination of disability and special education laws in the United States, a global leader in disability rights, while critically analyzing Türkiye's fragmented and incomplete adaptation of these frameworks. The U.S. legal landscape—including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—has set foundational standards for inclusive education and accessibility. However, ongoing reforms, implementation challenges, and systemic barriers reveal persistent gaps even in this established system. In contrast, Türkiye's special education regulations, though modeled after U.S. laws, lack critical components and the underlying ethos necessary for effective implementation. Despite years of formal

policy adoption, Türkiye's system remains fraught with systemic inefficiencies, inconsistent oversight, and barriers to access, leaving professionals and families struggling to secure quality services. This discussion will highlight disparities in policy application, enforcement, and cultural responsiveness, emphasizing the urgent need for accountability and structural reform to uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities. Presenters will draw on firsthand experiences in both contexts to illustrate these challenges and propose pathways toward more equitable systems.

Keywords: special education, disability law and policy, Turkish special education regulations, United States, IDEA, Section 504, ADA, comparative analysis, inclusive education



Abstract 1.12

Teaching Logic in the French School System

Richie Rizkalla Elian

My prior research examined historical and philosophical approaches to how young learners develop scientific knowledge, particularly their construction, questioning, and internalization of scientific concepts through interdisciplinary learning. Building on this foundation, my current doctoral work bridges the fields of mathematical logic, the philosophy of science, and science education. While my dissertation explores the axiomatization of relativity, the logical analysis of time travel paradoxes, and the pedagogy of logic, this presentation focuses on the third dimension: the teaching of logical reasoning in the French school system. Drawing on my background in mathematics education and curriculum analysis, I investigate how fundamental logical structures—such as direct/indirect proof, contrapositive reasoning, equivalence, and counterexamples—are introduced and developed across the French curriculum. Through a cross-disciplinary lens (encompassing mathematics, physics, philosophy, and history), I trace the progression of these reasoning skills from primary to upper secondary education. By analyzing curriculum documents, textbooks, and classroom practices, I identify consistencies and gaps in how logic is taught across subjects. I argue that strengthening explicit connections between disciplines can enhance students' logical understanding and metacognitive awareness. To support this goal, I propose pedagogical strategies, practical tools, and tailored guidelines for teachers of diverse disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and educational levels. These resources aim to facilitate the effective integration of logical reasoning into everyday classroom instruction. Grounded in formal logic yet oriented toward accessibility, this research seeks to make logic more meaningful for young learners while contributing to broader improvements in science education.

Keywords: teaching logic, French school system, reasoning skills, axiomatics in education, types of reasoning, proof

Thematic Section 2. International Education Issues

Abstract 2.1

Education at a Crossroads: The Crossroads Phenomenon and Factors Impacting Crossroads Decisions

Johan Beckmann

The phenomenon of a crossroads is commonplace in a large variety of contexts, from e.g. choosing what road to take at a crossroads to what governance system the rulers of a country should employ. Having to make a crossroads decision is reached when a person or a group of people reach a point where a choice has to be made about the future and related matters. Decisions about a national education system at a crossroads require an in-depth knowledge of this multi-faceted phenomenon. This knowledge should be based on a meticulous analysis of established data sets about what led the existing system to the crossroads. The problems and the positive characteristics of the existing system should be painstakingly identified to enable responsible role-players to make the best possible decisions to optimally lead educands to adulthood and benefit society (especially the economy) in general. The persons and institutions that will be used to pursue the chosen vision must be cautiously chosen and need to know decision-making procedures and processes in a testing situation, and also have proven records of successful decisions in difficult circumstances. People capable of developing, implementing, and assessing an implementation plan fitting the choice that has been made are essential elements of a successful system. Where such people are hard to find, training strategies as well as plans to attract suitable people need to be addressed. Examples of wrong and correct crossroads decisions in South Africa and elsewhere about entire education systems or essential constituent system parts can be identified. The aim of crossroad decisions will remain to optimize the likelihood of establishing successful and productive systems.

Keywords: commonplace, competent decision-makers, competent implementers, correct and incorrect choices, future or destination choices, implementation strategies, phenomenon



Abstract 2.2

Education at a Crossroads: Competencies for Sustainable and Future-Oriented Educational Leadership

André du Plessis

Leading for sustainable and future-oriented education requires agile educational leaders. This means that they must not only understand the interconnected complexities of education in the 21st century, but also possess the relevant competencies to lead their educational institutions towards a sustainable future.

This paper argues through a complexity theory lens that educational leaders who aspire to be sustainable and future orientated educational leadership must be contextually intelligent, be aware of global megatrends and their impact on education, be able to recognise and respond to opportunities, challenges and adversity, be able to lead transformation and change and know how to lead and manage learning organisations.

Keywords: educational leadership, complexity theory, contextual intelligence, global megatrends, strategic thinking, strategic planning, change leadership, learning organisations



Abstract 2.3

Enhancing Teacher Global Competence through Equitable Global South-North Partnerships: A Botswana Case Study

Karen L. Biraimah, Agreement L. Jotia & Brianna A. Kurtz

This paper addresses the importance and challenges of enhancing educators' global competence through durable, responsive, and equitable learning experiences for educators within equitable Global South-North partnerships. The desired results of these partnerships should be to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with quality experiences that enable them to promote global understanding and social justice within their classrooms, as well as instill greater levels of global competence within their students. We include in this paper: a) A brief overview of the global competence concept; b) An analysis of how this concept can be applied through more equitable partnerships between universities in the Global South and Global North; c) A case study of a partnership developed to provide authentic and culturally enriching experiences for U.S. based pre-service and in-service teachers in Botswana's Remote Area Dweller Schools; d) A discussion of the impact and longitudinal effectiveness of joint study abroad programs on educators' content knowledge, cultural perspectives, and ability to promote global justice and cultural competencies; and e) An analysis of transformative study abroad programs that enhance their host communities through enriched communication, cultural immersion, and service.

Keywords: equitable partnerships, global competence, global partnerships, Global South-North, study abroad, teacher education



Abstract 2.4

Analyzing Policy Limitations in Ensuring Learner Safety in Technology Education Environments

Coenraad Jurgens & Zacharias Louw de Beer

Securing the safety of learners and teachers in technology school workshops requires effective risk management and the enforcement of safety policies. This paper presents the findings of a mixed-methods study conducted in South African technical schools where mechanical technology is taught. The study aimed to investigate the role of safety policies and risk management strategies in safeguarding learners and to explore teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on workshop safety. A

comprehensive literature review and empirical investigation revealed that most schools lack specific safety policies addressing risk management in workshops. The findings indicate an urgent need for clear legal guidelines within school and departmental safety policies to support teachers in fulfilling their duty of care. The study highlights the weaknesses in current safety management practices and emphasizes the importance of policy-driven risk management to enhance workshop safety and prevent injuries among learners.

Keywords: Constitution, safe workshop environment, duty of the school government, duty of the principal, safety policy



Abstract 2.5

Not Everything That Counts Can Be Counted: Rethinking the Influence of Leadership Programmes

Molly Fuller

School leadership is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of educational improvement, particularly in contexts marked by inequality and resource constraints. In response, national and international leadership development programmes, such as South Africa's Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management (AdvDip SLM), the United Kingdom's National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), Sweden's National Principal Training Programme and Ontario's Principal Qualification Programme (PQP) have emerged to support the preparation of principals. While these initiatives aim to enhance school performance and leadership capacity, they are often assessed using narrow accountability metrics, primarily student achievement scores. This paper argues that such evaluations obscure the full range of outcomes produced by leadership development. Drawing on qualitative data from South African school leaders enrolled in the AdvDip SLM, as well as supporting evidence from international research, the paper explores how leadership programmes contribute to school improvement through less tangible means. Participants reported significant growth in leadership confidence, strategic thinking, collaboration, and instructional involvement. Many noted a shift from administrative routines to pedagogical leadership, as well as the development of stakeholder engagement practices. These changes, while difficult to quantify, are foundational to effective school leadership and long-term improvement. Similar trends have been documented internationally, suggesting that professional growth, reflective capacity, and community engagement are consistent outcomes across varied education systems. The paper concludes by calling for a more nuanced evaluation framework, one that balances measurable indicators with qualitative evidence of leadership transformation. Leadership development programmes must be understood not simply as interventions for improving test scores, but as long-term investments in building sustainable leadership practices, especially in disadvantaged educational contexts. Recognizing what cannot easily be counted is essential to understanding what truly counts in educational leadership.

Keywords: influence, leadership, leadership development, leadership programme, non-measurable outcomes, school improvement



Abstract 2.6

The Promotion of Critical Language Awareness Teaching in the Language Classroom

Nadine Fouché-Karsten & Judith Elizabeth Vos

All texts exert a certain social influence, as they are designed to recruit us into their version of "the truth." However, the power and influence of language are not always immediately apparent in texts. The official curriculum document for Afrikaans Home Language, the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), acknowledges this by including critical language awareness (CLA) as a curriculum component. However, CAPS does not provide a clear explanation of CLA for Afrikaans teachers, who are expected to teach it. The definition of CLA appears as an afterthought in the glossary at the back of the curriculum document. Furthermore, the components of CLA (e.g., statements, opinions, stereotypes) are presented as a checklist for teaching and mastering CLA, rather than as a framework for fostering critical engagement with language. In practice, teachers often rely heavily on CAPS guidelines, directly referencing them during CLA instruction. This leads to lessons that are formal, discouraging class discussions and instead prompting learners to provide responses they believe the teacher wants to hear. Such an approach is not conducive to developing learners' critical thinking skills. To address this over-reliance on CAPS guidelines, a reflective teaching practice should be implemented. To support the development of self-directed teachers (and learners) within the context of CLA instruction, the primary objective of this paper is to equip teachers with strategies to create their own CLA content. To achieve this, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify effective CLA teaching strategies. Various strategies will be proposed during the oral presentation, along with an explanation of how this research contributes to a broader project aimed at promoting critical language awareness.

Keywords: Afrikaans classroom, critical language awareness, critical readers, teaching strategies, self-directed learning



Abstract 2.7

The Influence of Science and Technology on the Foundation Phase Policies of the BRICS Associate Countries: A Comparative Study

Julia Correia, Deon Vos & Zacharias Louw de Beer

In this era of rapid scientific and technological advancement, the BRICS countries have harnessed innovation to revolutionise their education systems, redefining how learners learn, teachers instruct, and institutions operate. Adapting to these changes is essential for adequately preparing learners for their future careers. Continuous assessment and improvement are vital to enhance the education system of a country. The BRICS countries share growth potential and global recognition, making them suitable for comparison. This research explored the impact of science and technology on the Foundation Phase education policies of the BRICS associate countries. It investigated the nature of these policies and the role of external factors in shaping them. The study emphasises that science and technology have an unavoidable impact on education policies. The aim was to explore this impact, identify similarities and differences, and identify best practices. For this investigation, a qualitative comparative analysis was

used, involving collecting, analysing, and processing extensive data from various sources. Given the nature of the research question, a wide range of literature was consulted, and documents were compared using a comparative approach. This research followed the interpretivist paradigm, which explores social phenomena from the perspective of the subjects under study. Document analysis is a suitable method, with a seven-step process ensuring credibility and reliability. The study found that each BRICS country excels in specific scientific and technological domains. In recent years, all BRICS countries have come to recognise the importance of science and technology in Foundation Phase education as they foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. All BRICS countries incorporate science and technology into their national curricula to varying degrees, reflecting their unique needs.

Keywords: BRICS, comparative education, education systems, external determinants, Foundation Phase policies, science and technology



Abstract 2.8

Unveiling Student Identity: Understanding and Nurturing the Student of the 21st Century

Matjhabedi Mazibuko & Nonhlanhla Maseko

In the 21st century, understanding the diverse identities of students is crucial for enabling and advancing their success in educational settings. The method followed in this paper involved intersectionality as a theoretical framework and methodological tool, incorporating analysis and systematic review of electronic databases, as well as relevant peer-reviewed and edited articles. The importance of recognizing and embracing student identity as a fundamental aspect of effective education is explored, highlighting the evolving nature of student demographics, emphasizing the need to move beyond traditional categorizations and stereotypes to truly understand the complexities of who our students are today. The multifaceted dimensions of student identity are explored, encompassing factors such as race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic background, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and more. It emphasizes that student identity is not static but fluid, acknowledging the intersections and interplay of various aspects within an individual's identity. Furthermore, the implications of student identity on educational practices, pedagogy, curriculum, and support systems are explored. This paper emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive learning environments that validate and celebrate students' diverse identities, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. It discusses the role of cultural responsiveness and equity in addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by different student groups. Drawing on research and best practices, this paper highlights the benefits of adopting student-centered approaches that acknowledge and build upon the strengths, experiences, and perspectives students bring to the learning process. It emphasizes the significance of promoting inclusive dialogue, cultural exchange, and collaborative learning opportunities that encourage students to embrace their identities, respect others, and develop critical thinking skills. In conclusion, by recognizing and embracing student identity, institutions and educators can create educational environments that cultivate all students' holistic development and success in the 21st century.

Keywords: student identity, 21st century, student, institutions, student support, intersectionality



Abstract 2.9

Importance of Sustainably Maximizing the Research Capacity of Academic Practitioners: Voices from the Global Academic Arena

Carlo Daniels

In all its forms, topics, and functions, research holds the potential to be a powerful driving force that a country can employ to strengthen its economy, preserve the environment, and address societal inequalities. Thus, it is no surprise that countries globally have devoted increased attention and resources to nurturing the competencies of their research practitioners. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are responsible for nurturing researchers who can meet international research standards and contribute to the prosperity of their countries. This qualitative study, grounded in a postmodern research paradigm, employed the principles of grounded theory to achieve the purpose of the study. This research is based on a larger project that collected data from ten semi-structured interviews, a document analysis consisting of 40 documents, and a thorough review of global scholarly literature. To achieve the purpose of this study, the findings and recommendations stem from the literature review and document analysis. The purpose of this study was distinctive, as scholarly literature calls for more studies on sustainable research capacity building (SRCB). In addition, the limited available research focuses on capacity building (CB) in the health sector, whereas less attention is devoted to the development of academic professionals who conduct research in higher education. The findings revealed that research capacity plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs), improving the quality of research conducted by HEIs and their academic practitioners, and improving the education system. According to scholars located in different corners of the world, maximizing SRCB will require nurturing the ability of doctoral students, developing globally competent researchers, mentorship, applying a whole-institution approach, implementing effective institutional leadership, motivating research practitioners by offering research incentives, and establishing an enabling environment for research training.

Keywords: sustainable research capacity building, sustainable development goals, research in higher education



Thematic Section 3. Preschool and School Education: Policies & Practices

Abstract 3.1

Where Have All the Teachers Gone and Why? How Can the World Encourage More People to Join the Profession, or Has the Cause Already Been Lost?

Gillian L. S. Hilton

This paper explores the reasons why, across the world, fewer people have ambitions to become teachers and those in the profession are leaving early, particularly those after working for up to five years, and those in their fifties. It appears that becoming a teacher is no longer the ambition of many young people. The causes for this are many and varied, but include, poor pay rates in comparison with other graduate careers, long working hours and the need to take work home, difficulties with parents, who often do not support teachers in the disciplining of children, lack of sufficient financing of education to improve lives of teachers and school leaders and deal with the needs of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children and the deterioration in England and some other countries, in the behaviour of young children. One further reason in England, in particular, is the behaviour of Ofsted inspectors in judging the performance of schools after a short visit, which has, in some cases, resulted in teachers being sacked or, in desperation, committing suicide. However, this problem with recruiting and retaining staff in schools is a global one and is causing concern amongst developed and developing countries alike, and is raising serious concerns in the UN, UNESCO, and governments across the globe. Solutions have to be found to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030, which is focused on ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all in childhood and the encouragement of lifelong learning, to improve many aspects of human existence. A search of the literature on the subject is followed by the results of a survey of some English secondary school students' attitudes towards considering teaching as a future career.

Keywords: teachers, UN SDG4, loss of teachers, teacher shortages, career choices of young people



Abstract 3.2

Risk Management in Addressing the Duty of Care in Mechanical Technology Workshops

Coenraad Jurgens

Common law is an essential component in the South African education context, and the duty of care principle directly applies to education. To allow the teacher to create a secure environment for order, regularity, and protection – that supports affective teaching and learning – it is essential that teachers take sufficient notice of the common law rules that apply to education. The teacher needs to have sufficient knowledge of educational law so that they can ensure the safety of learners under their care. This legal awareness enables educators to act as reasonable professionals, capable of fulfilling their duty of care responsibly and effectively. The research utilized quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the technology teachers' understanding of common law determinants that underpin their duty of care in the Mechanical workshop setting. The results revealed a significant lack of knowledge regarding these legal principles among the teachers. This raises the question of whether teachers can adequately fulfill their duty of care without properly understanding the relevant legal requirements. To effectively nurture a safe workshop environment conducive to teaching and learning, teachers must enhance their knowledge of education law, as their responsibilities are guided by common law and determinants.

Keywords: secure school environment, accidents and injuries, duty of care, in loco parentis, common law



Abstract 3.3

Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Quo Vadis?

JP Rossouw & MC Rossouw

In 2024, amendments regarding, inter alia, early childhood development (ECD) were promulgated in South Africa, most notably the inclusion of the Reception Grade (Grade R) into basic education, rendering its attendance compulsory. All parents are now compelled to see to it that their young children attend school from Grade R. With special reference to Grade R and the young child's best interests, this paper offers a concise analysis of the legal framework for ECD in South Africa. Considering relevant legal imperatives, some practical implications of the amendments are touched upon. All indications suggest that the school infrastructure is not adequately prepared for this new addition to basic education. The central question is whether the framework for ECD and its implementation have the potential to ensure the much-needed and proper progress of ECD in South Africa. It was found that, while the legal framework is well constructed and adequate, only a stronger political will and dedicated, focused attention to ECD by education authorities will ensure success.

Keywords: Constitution, Children's Act, Schools Act, early childhood development, Grade R, legal framework



Abstract 3.4

The Impact of Constructivist Learning Environment on Students' Motivation in Primary School

Blerina Çibukçiu

Learning in a constructivist environment has the potential to help students' motivation in primary school. This study aims to present the impact of the constructivist learning environment on students' motivation in primary school and specify which aspects of the constructivist learning environment are related to the types of students' motivation in primary school. The data was collected using two instruments: the Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES), which aims to measure students' perceptions of their learning environment, and the Elementary School Motivation Scale to measure students' motivation. The study was undertaken with 320 primary school students. This study highlights the importance of constructivist learning environments in fostering student motivation. The results show a positive relationship between self-importance, uncertainty, critical voice, shared control, and student negotiation with different types of motivation and a positive impact of the constructivist learning environment on students' motivation, specifically on intrinsic motivation. These findings suggest that improving the learning environment, especially when it is oriented towards constructivist practices, can lead to an increase in students' motivation to engage in learning. These findings help teachers and policymakers implement constructivist learning environments to foster motivation in primary school students.

Keywords: constructivist learning environment, motivation, primary school, student



Abstract 3.5

Cultivating Life Skills in the Greek School System: The Challenge of the “21+ Skills Labs” through the Lens of PISA

Nikolaos Neveskiotis

In today's era of rapid social and technological transformations, the need for an education transcending traditional knowledge transmission has become imperative. Students are now expected not only to achieve academic competence but also to develop a broad range of life skills that will enable them to successfully manage the personal, social, and professional challenges of the 21st century. Both the international literature and the findings of the PISA 2022 assessment confirm that skills such as self-regulation, resilience, collaboration, and critical thinking are just as crucial as academic knowledge for students' future well-being. Within this context, the Greek state has introduced the institutionalized subject “21+ Skills Labs” across compulsory education, marking a shift toward a more holistic and experiential learning approach. This study aims to explore the significance of this reform through the lens of the PISA findings, identifying points of convergence as well as challenges in its implementation, and examining the extent to which it can enhance life skills in the Greek educational landscape.

Keywords: 21+ Skills Labs, PISA 2022, Greece, life skills



Abstract 3.6

The Challenges that Secondary School Teachers Experience in Practicing Philosophies of Teaching and Learning in Their Classrooms in South Africa

Bianca Williams & Celestin Mayombe

Philosophies of teaching and learning are significant because they outline the roles and duties of teachers in improving learners' academic performance and progress. Secondary school teachers attempt to adopt philosophies of teaching and learning that promote effective learning. However, studies show that they face challenges in practicing philosophies of teaching and learning in their classrooms due to diverse factors. Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to establish the challenges secondary school teachers experience in practicing philosophies of teaching and learning in their classrooms. The study used a qualitative research approach and a multiple case-study design to understand the participants' perspectives. The study population consisted of 43 Grade 10-12 secondary school teachers within a circuit of the Buffalo City Metro (BCM) District in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The sample size consisted of 12 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants based on set criteria. The researchers used semi-structured and focus group interviews to collect data from participants. The study used thematic analysis methods to analyze data. The findings revealed that the lack of resources (instructional materials, access to technology, and supportive learning environments) and the different intellectual levels of learners as challenges that teachers experience when practicing philosophies of teaching and learning in classrooms. The authors conclude that the challenges resulted in teachers

finding it difficult to develop learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, competencies, and communication skills that are fundamental for their success in the real world of work.

Keywords: challenges, critical-thinking skills, secondary school, South Africa, teaching and learning philosophies, teachers



Abstract 3.7

Extended School Program in Slovenian Primary Education

Špela Bergoč & Nives Markun Puhar

Students in Slovenian primary schools can participate in an extended school program alongside the mandatory primary school curriculum. This program is available to all students, is free of charge, and participation is voluntary. Five years ago, we began to experimentally modify it to meet the needs of modern times and lifestyles. The renewed, extended program offers choice and encourages students to engage in activities that interest them or in activities where they need additional help and encouragement. The extended program complements and enhances the mandatory primary school curriculum through fundamental areas: Physical Activity and Health for Good Physical and Mental Well-being, Cultural and Civic Education, and Learning to Learn. The openness of the extended program curriculum gives schools significant autonomy but also considerable responsibility. The program is delivered by teachers with relevant professional qualifications and additional acquired knowledge. In this paper, we present how schools are coping with this innovation, showcase some successfully tested innovative ideas, and highlight some of the most pressing challenges schools face in implementing the extended program. The aim is to include every student and thus enable their all-round personal development, regardless of individual differences, talents, peculiarities, interests, traditions, culture, or social status. The program's goals include promoting critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, developing learning-to-learn skills, and raising awareness of strategies for regulating emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. The program encourages quality leisure time, career orientation, attention to physical and mental well-being, and good relationships, thereby promoting active engagement in a democratic society. Its interdisciplinary approach promotes the integration of knowledge from different subjects and subject areas. Achieving the goals of the extended program is process-oriented and is not graded. Within this program, free play and planned structured free time hold a special place.

Keywords: extended program, student, primary education, choice, health, self-regulation, autonomy



Abstract 3.8

Exploring Core Competencies in Omani Schools: Principals' Perceptions and Their Role in Enhancing School Performance

Nesreen Saleh Mohamed Salah El-Din & Fathi M. Abunaser

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of school principals in Oman regarding the concept of core competencies, explore the methods and mechanisms used to identify core competencies within Omani

schools, and determine the extent to which core competencies are utilized to improve the performance of Omani schools. It also analyzes the challenges faced in utilizing core competencies in the educational field, focusing on the factors influencing the investment of these competencies in Omani schools. The study employs a qualitative design to explore the views of school principals and their assistants regarding the importance of core competencies and their role in improving school performance. A purposive sample of 45 participants from seven Omani governorates was selected to ensure diversity in perspectives and experiences. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, addressing topics related to the importance of core competencies, methods of development, and associated challenges. Content analysis was conducted using MaxQDA software to analyze the data inductively, which helped identify key themes and challenges affecting the utilization of competencies. The study reached several important findings, including the lack of an official definition for the concept of core competencies within the Omani education system, the reliance on informal methods to identify core competencies, and that school principals try to link core competencies to achieve school plan goals by utilizing them in professional development, workshops, and educational activities. The results revealed several key challenges hindering the full utilization of core competencies in the educational field, including organizational challenges, weak infrastructure, social barriers, technical challenges, and financial, administrative, and personal constraints. Based on the study's findings, a set of recommendations can be proposed to develop strategies that enhance the investment of core competencies in supporting educational and administrative performance in schools.

Keywords: core competencies, improving school performance, education in Oman, human resources in education



Abstract 3.9

The Educational Policy of the New Mexican School Concerning Human Rights

Amelia Molina García, Mariana Segura Molina & Christian I. Ponce Crespo

This paper presents an analysis of the approaches and implementation process of the New Mexican School, a project that emerged from the government proposals of the Fourth Transformation. This new educational model integrates the principles of human rights into its philosophical, curricular, and pedagogical structure, as well as the challenges the State faces in ensuring its effective and adequate implementation in contexts marked for decades by inequality, exclusion, and unaddressed, even invisible, sociocultural diversity. The analysis is based on the five fundamental principles of human rights. Not only that, but also, from the principle of universality, it considers aspects of accessibility to education and aspects related to information and communication channels through digital tools, as well as educational inclusion, cultural plurality, and diversity, to develop a proposal for intercultural education, among other proposals included in this work. As part of the conclusions, we affirm that the New Mexican School represents an education with a humanistic, inclusive, and community-based approach. Its approach can potentially transform educational practices by generating a more equitable and fair system. Therefore, it represents a challenge for the State to provide adequate conditions and resources for quality education.

Keywords: human rights, basic education, New Mexican School



Abstract 3.10

Empowering Learners: The Role of Project-Based Learning in Overcoming English Proficiency Challenges

Candice Ceronio, Shantha Naidoo & Andri Schoonen

Project-based learning (PBL) significantly enhances learners' academic performance when facing English language challenges. This paper examines the support that PBL provides to learners with limited English proficiency. Teachers who have implemented PBL emphasize the necessity of early planning, intervention, and ongoing support and guidance. The findings underscore the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary tools and strategies to support learners with limited English proficiency effectively. By fostering a collaborative and engaging learning environment, PBL enhances academic outcomes and empowers learners to overcome language barriers, ultimately reaching their full potential. Drawing on research conducted in schools around Johannesburg South, this paper offers valuable insights into the role of PBL in promoting educational equity and inclusivity in multilingual contexts. The study underscores the critical role of teachers in facilitating PBL and adapting it to meet the diverse linguistic needs of learners. The success of PBL in this context demonstrates its potential as a transformative educational approach that bridges gaps in language proficiency and equips learners with the skills and confidence needed to thrive in an English-medium educational setting. Ultimately, this research advocates for the broader implementation of PBL to support language development and academic achievement among learners with limited English proficiency, thereby fostering a more inclusive and effective educational system.

Keywords: inclusive education, language proficiency, multilingual classrooms, project-based learning, teacher training



Abstract 3.11

Pioneering Progressive Educators in Turkey: Ayşe Sıdıka, Ömer Adil and Tevfik Fikret

Seyfi Kenan & Şüra Tekin

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of education in fostering individual growth and contributing to societal advancement, with a particular focus on the contributions of pioneering Turkish educators. This research aims to explore how modern educational practices and philosophies, as put forth by key figures such as Ayşe Sıdıka, Ömer Adil, and Tevfik Fikret, have shaped the development of education in Turkey. Ayşe Sıdıka, an educator and the author of Turkey's first book on modern educational science, points out that the happiness and wealth of a nation are measured by the degree of perfection in its intellectual education. Ömer Adil, an Impressionist painter, was one of the first Turkish art teachers at the School of Fine Arts in Istanbul. His contributions to art education played a pivotal role in shaping the development of students in the field. Tevfik Fikret, who holds a progressive view and is a prominent Turkish poet, educator, and intellectual, stated that education is not just the most important element of society, but its very essence. The central focus of this study is the examination of how education nurtures individuals and contributes to societal advancement, which aligns with discussions on policies aimed at

improving educational systems. The analysis emphasizes the intersection of historical educational philosophies with contemporary efforts to innovate and enhance the school education system. The primary sources through educational journals used in this research are obtained from the National Library, İBB Atatürk Library, and ISAM Library in Turkey. This research is based on three headings related to progressive educators: 1) Life, 2) Educational Philosophy, and 3) Conceptualizations in Works. The transferable philosophical background and practices from these educators' works are expected to be remarkable and thought-provoking for curriculum designers, offering valuable guidance for the development of a new educational curriculum.

Keywords: progressive education, teaching methods, educational philosophy



Abstract 3.12

Analysis of Theories of Language and Communication at the Preschool Level

Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez, Francisco Flores-Cuevas, Felipe-Anastacio González-González, Luz-Maria Zuñiga-Medina, Graciela-Esperanza Giron-Villacis, Irma-Carolina Gonzalez-Sanchez, Joaquin Torres-Mata & José Venegas-Vazquez

The main objective of this paper is to compare the different theories of Skinner, Bruner, Chomsky, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Amsterdam and Bruner, examining how they relate to the acquisition of language and communication development, in conjunction with the influence of teaching practice at the preschool level. The area of language and communication is one of the most important fields of training at the preschool level since that is where the need to communicate originates, and it is essential for infants. Childhood is one of the most important stages of human development, as it is a stage where changes are constantly produced and where the evolution of infants is continuous. This paper critically analyzes these theories, highlighting their strengths and limitations in explaining language acquisition and communication in young children. Skinner's behaviorist approach emphasizes environmental reinforcement, while Chomsky's innatist theory underscores innate linguistic capabilities. Piaget's constructivist perspective links language development to cognitive growth, whereas Vygotsky's sociocultural theory focuses on social interaction as a key driver. Amsterdam and Bruner's interactionist theory bridges these views, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between innate predispositions and environmental stimuli. By integrating these perspectives, educators can adopt a holistic approach to language instruction, tailoring methods to meet the diverse needs of preschoolers. Practical implications for classroom activities, such as interactive storytelling, collaborative play, and reinforcement techniques, are also discussed. Ultimately, this comparative analysis aims to enrich teaching practices and support the linguistic and communicative development of young learners.

Keywords: theories of language and communication, preschool level, infant, language acquisition, cognitive development



Thematic Section 4. Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training

Abstract 4.1

Controlling Student Numbers: The Challenge of Managing Exponential Growth in University Admissions in Nigeria – An Update

James Ogunleye

Over the past six decades, since Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom, there has been a phenomenal rise in the number of students seeking admission into tertiary education, particularly public universities. This growth has reached critical levels over the last decade, with fewer than half of the approximately 1.3 million annual applicants securing university placements. This empirical study examines the challenges of managing and controlling the exponential growth in demand for university admissions in Nigeria. It focuses on the implications for both regulatory authorities and higher education institutions. The research adopts a multi-method approach comprising a scoping review of relevant literature, content analysis of key policy documents, and empirical data sourced from Nigeria's two principal regulatory bodies: the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The NUC oversees licensing, quality assurance, and standard setting in universities, while JAMB conducts the unified matriculation examinations for entry into universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Findings reveal that both JAMB and individual institutions deploy varied and sometimes inconsistent metrics to limit admissions as a form of demand-side control. On the supply side, although the licensing and proliferation of private universities have expanded significantly over the past two decades to absorb excess demand, public universities remain the preferred choice for a large segment of applicants, thereby sustaining pressure on limited public-sector capacity. The study concludes by offering targeted recommendations for policy reform, institutional restructuring, and regulatory innovation to address the persistent imbalance between student demand and available capacity in Nigeria's higher education sector.

Keywords: university admissions, higher education policy, Nigeria, student enrolment growth, JAMB, regulatory challenges



Abstract 4.2

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) of Two Higher Education Systems for Refugee Youth: Turkey and Spain

Irem Altinkalp

Higher education (HE) plays a key role in helping refugee youth build stable and productive futures. This paper examines the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of HE policies for

refugees in two Mediterranean countries: Turkey and Spain. Through qualitative policy analysis, the study evaluates scholarly literature and international reports within the SWOT framework. Findings show that Spain has a decentralized HE system, where policies vary across autonomous communities, while Turkey follows a more centralized approach under the Council of Higher Education, though admission requirements still differ between universities. In terms of strengths, Turkey's system makes diploma recognition easier and exempts Syrian refugees from tuition fees, whereas Spain offers university-led support programs that include tuition assistance, legal aid, and language courses. However, challenges persist. In Turkey, refugees encounter admission barriers such as limited quotas and the International Student Exam requirement. In Spain, high validation fees, long processing times, and proof of prior education make university access difficult. Additionally, financial difficulties, language barriers, and a lack of clear information about HE opportunities remain common issues in both countries. Given the protracted nature of refugee displacement, developing inclusive HE policies may not only improve access to education for refugee students but also bring cultural and economic benefits to host societies.

Keywords: SWOT analysis, higher education, refugee education, Spain, Turkey



Abstract 4.3

Emotional Intelligence, Learning Motivation, and Social-Emotional Learning among University Students

Gordana Stankovska, Dimitar Dimitrovski, Fatime Ziberi & Tatjana Takasmanova

Education plays a central role in preparing students to face the changes and complexities of the environment. Society and students' life experiences have significantly transformed in the last century. Emotional intelligence, communication skills, and adaptability are important for university students. Thus, the main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, learning motivation, and social-emotional learning competencies among university students. The Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test, the Work Preference Inventory, and the Social-Emotional Competence Questionnaire were administered to a sample of 250 university students. The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between the level of emotional intelligence, learning motivation, and the subdimensions of social-emotional competencies. Students' social-emotional competencies had the highest rating in self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management, while relationship management and responsible decision-making had lower levels. Simultaneously, there was a significant difference between the scores on social-emotional competencies and gender, but there was no difference between emotional intelligence, learning motivation, and gender. The study concluded that promoting students' emotional intelligence, learning motivation, social-emotional learning, and enhancing students' performance in the new technological world is a global issue.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, learning motivation, social-emotional learning, higher education institutions, management



Abstract 4.4

Education In-between Men's Antagonism and Women's Protagonism

Shabana Shamaas Gul Khattak

This study argues about Pukhtun women's protagonist and men's antagonist approaches towards women's status and higher education opportunities in the Pukhtun society of Pakistan. My sample women perceived higher education as a necessary and empowering element for women's transformation into a just Pukhtun society. They, however, faced antagonism from their family men for their higher education opportunities. They articulated helplessness regarding their subjects' choices at the graduate level, ultimately dropping them from professional degrees at the post-graduate level. There was no frustration among the sample women regarding family interference in their future lives. However, the sample women showed dissatisfaction with the prevailing education standards in the province and demanded that women be educated in women-only education settings because co-education revealed a major barrier to the Pukhtuns' antagonism.

Keywords: women, Pukhtunkhwa, higher education, Pukhtuns, male domination



Abstract 4.5

Attitudes of Child Development Associate Degree Students Toward the Use of Technology in Education

Ayşe Duran Yılmaz & Ebru Hasibe Tanju Aslışen

Today, the integration of technology into daily life has brought about significant transformations in the field of education. Educational technologies have emerged as tools that enrich the learning process, address individual differences, and contribute to the development of 21st-century skills. In this context, the attitudes of pre-service teachers and students in education-related fields toward technology use are considered important indicators of their professional competencies. This study aims to determine the attitudes of associate degree students enrolled in child development programs toward the use of technology in education and to examine whether these attitudes differ based on various demographic variables. The research is designed using the descriptive survey model, one of the quantitative research methods. The study group consists of students from child development associate degree programs at three different universities. A standardized attitude scale will be used as the data collection tool to measure students' attitudes toward technology use. The data will be analysed regarding variables such as gender, age, grade level, the type of high school from which students graduated, daily duration of technology usage, and the university attended. It is anticipated that the findings will reveal generally positive attitudes toward technology among students, and that some demographic variables may have a significant impact on these attitudes. The results are expected to contribute to the evaluation of child development curricula in terms of technology integration and to highlight the importance of fostering technological competencies in future professionals.

Keywords: educational technology, child development, student attitudes, associate degree, technology integration, early childhood education



Abstract 4.6

Assessing the Preparedness of Lecturers and the Willingness of ECE Students to Integrate Academic E-portfolios in South African HEIs

Tebogo Jillian Mampane & Sharon Thabo Mampane

This qualitative conceptual paper explores the understanding of the integration of academic e-portfolios in Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs within South African higher education institutions (HEIs). Grounded in the principles of transformative learning theory and digital pedagogy, the research examines the interplay between lecturer preparedness and student willingness as critical factors in successful e-portfolio implementation. Through a systematic analysis of existing literature and theoretical models, the study proposes three key conceptual dimensions: pedagogical readiness, technological acceptance, and institutional ecosystem. The conceptual framework identifies lecturer preparedness as encompassing digital literacy, assessment competency, and reflective mentoring skills, while student willingness incorporates perceived usefulness, self-efficacy, and professional identity formation. The study highlights how South Africa's unique HEI context – characterized by resource disparities, multilingual classrooms, and decolonization imperatives – necessitates an adapted approach to e-portfolio integration. Particular attention is given to the tension between global digital education trends and local implementation challenges in under-resourced institutions. Emerging conceptual propositions suggest that: lecturer preparedness mediates the relationship between institutional support and effective e-portfolio implementation; student willingness is positively influenced by visible career benefits and scaffolded digital skill development; and, sustainable adoption requires alignment with Ubuntu principles of collaborative learning and community-embedded knowledge construction. The framework contributes theoretically by bridging digital pedagogy with Southern epistemologies, offering an alternative to Western-centric e-portfolio models. Practical implications center on context-sensitive implementation strategies that acknowledge infrastructure limitations while leveraging mobile technology and peer learning networks. The study calls for further empirical research to validate the proposed framework and explore its applicability across diverse African HEI contexts.

Keywords: conceptual framework, academic e-portfolios, early childhood education, digital pedagogy, lecturer preparedness, student willingness, higher education transformation, Ubuntu pedagogy



Abstract 4.7

From Science Teacher to Research Supervisor: Science Teachers' Identity Constructions Through Supervising Student Research Projects

Deniz Sarıbaşı & Ertan Çetinkaya

Identifying research as a key component of science education enables teachers to enhance their students' grasp of scientific concepts and their ability to address real-world challenges. Developing scientific understanding and problem-solving skills requires active student participation in research

projects. Therefore, examining science teachers' professional identity in the context of supervising student research is crucial. This study explores the perspectives of ten science teachers on their professional identity and their ability to guide students in writing research proposals and preparing and presenting research posters. Through interviews, participants shared their views on teacher identity both broadly and as researchers. Three of them also provided student research proposals and posters for further analysis. Seven proposals were independently assessed for coherence between topic, aim, and methodology, as well as overall quality. Additionally, research posters were evaluated for accuracy in representing key components such as topic, aim, methods, and results. Findings from the interviews revealed that participants did not perceive research as a core element of effective teaching. Moreover, their experiences in supervising research projects did not seem to impact their own research engagement or understanding. Analysis of proposals and posters also highlighted gaps in teachers' ability to effectively mentor student research, regardless of their teaching or research background. These results suggest that teacher education programs should integrate research experiences for pre-service science teachers, particularly within teaching practice courses, to better equip them for mentoring student research.

Keywords: science teacher, teacher supervisor, teacher identity.



Abstract 4.8

Ignorance and the Role of Intellectuals: Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education and Teacher Education

Alberto G. Canen & Ana Ivenicki

This paper examines ignorance and its manifestations regarding the role of intellectuals and science, discussing how distorted perceptions can lead to the contempt or devaluation of academic knowledge. This has been considered a threat to the value of education, putting it at a crossroads in contemporary times. The paper discusses the role of higher education and teacher training in counteracting distortions and prejudices against science and intellectuals. The methodology is qualitative, drawing firstly on a literature review to pinpoint how those issues have been addressed, and secondly on the analysis of discourses from interviews with two academics. The paper suggests possible ways to counteract those trends, among which is imbuing research with the value of cultural diversity and epistemology. It discusses the ideas gleaned from both the literature review and the interviews, suggesting challenges and ways to move forward so that higher education and teacher education can help disseminate the value of science, intellectuals, and truth, preparing future generations to advance educational research for the good of humanity.

Keywords: ignorance, intellectuals, higher education, teacher education, multiculturalism and epistemology, educational research, leadership



Abstract 4.9

Kuverengegwa as an Organizing Principle of Higher Education Systems

Tafadzwa Ruzive

Kuverengegwa, “to be counted”, is an African concept of imputation that I introduce in this paper to capture the notion of being recognized, valued, and credited in the higher education domain. The discourse on credit systems has been pervasive in higher education literature for the past three decades. Focus has been on operational, functional, and structural issues such as the fairness of credit systems, their equity, the “exchange rate” between universities, and the ethical considerations that lie behind. However, no research has been done to explore the paradigmatic antecedents of credits, credit policies, and credit systems. *Kuverengegwa*, an African traditional concept, is invoked to understand how the higher education system emerges, how it attracts willing participants, as well as why it creates new knowledge that did not exist before (moves from the known to the unknown in systems parlance). This paper explores national higher education systems from a *Kuverengegwa* theory point of view. Utilizing a pragmatic approach, I juxtapose the financial system and the higher education credit system to find similarities and differences. This process sheds light on hitherto unknown possibilities that exist in the operational modalities of national higher education systems as well as universities. The core of this model is explored, and applications are drawn with conclusions aimed at addressing fundamental imbalances and inequities in higher education systems, closing out the paper.

Keywords: credit, credit systems, social capital, inclusive education, Global North, Global South, internationalization



Abstract 4.10

Developing Teacher-Researcher Identity through Participatory Action Research in a Teaching Practice Course

Deniz Saribaş

This study investigated the process by which pre-service elementary school teachers (PESTs) cultivate a teacher-researcher identity through the implementation of participatory action research (PAR) in a teaching practice course. Employing a qualitative case study design, two PESTs engaged in participatory PAR concerning student nutrition and food accessibility issues across two semesters. Data was collected using problem identification, planning, and evaluation reports, in addition to final reflections and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed that participants’ development of a teacher-researcher identity was characterized by four interrelated subthemes: (1) identifying and addressing problems, (2) planning and conducting research, (3) presenting evidence and justifying claims, and (4) collaboration and reflective thinking. The findings indicated that while one participant adopted a classroom-focused, intervention-based approach, the other engaged in broader social justice-oriented research, demonstrating distinct yet equally valid pathways to teacher-researcher identity formation. The study under consideration demonstrates how the implementation of PAR in teaching practice fosters the ability of PSETs to engage in critical analysis of educational problems, systematically use evidence, and engage in collaboration and self-reflection regarding their professional roles. The implications of these findings

suggest that the integration of structured reflective practices and collaborative research opportunities within the framework of teaching practice courses can more effectively support PSETs in their development as research-informed practitioners.

Keywords: teacher-researcher identity, participatory action research, teaching practice, pre-service elementary teacher education



Abstract 4.11

Contribution of Socio-Demographic Variables, Distant Learning Variables, Components of Self-Regulation of Learning, Personality Traits as Predictors in GPA, and Satisfaction with GPA as Criteria in Teacher Education Students

Anela Nikčević-Milković, Darko Lončarić & Gabrijela Galko

The goal of this research was to examine the contribution of socio-demographic variables, distance learning (DL) variables (methods and time spent on DL), attitude toward DL, education in DL, self-regulated learning (SRL) components (motivational and cognitive learning strategies, coping strategies for school failure), and personality traits as predictors of grade point average (GPA) and satisfaction with GPA as criteria in DL environments. The participants were students from various teacher training programs in the Republic of Croatia (N = 266). Information technology is rapidly transforming educational systems in Croatia and worldwide, making SRL a key prerequisite for effective learning. Adopting SRL components is crucial for teacher education students, both for their own learning and for teaching future students. The research was conducted online using several scales: the Scale of Attitudes about DL, Component Scales of SRL, the Big Five Inventory, and a Socio-Demographic Questionnaire. Results indicate that participants had high GPAs and high satisfaction with their GPAs. Their attitude toward DL was average. Correlations between most variables were low to moderately statistically significant. The objective criterion (GPA) explained 42% of the variance. Higher GPA was associated with: higher family socioeconomic status (SES), greater satisfaction with GPA, more forum participation, more time spent in DL, lower neuroticism, greater use of help-seeking from friends (external and internal) and teachers (internal), more frequent use of adaptive cognitive strategies (e.g., goal setting) and maladaptive strategies (e.g., memorization, external persuasion), less frequent use of maladaptive strategies (e.g., help-seeking from parents, focusing on minimum requirements). The subjective criterion (satisfaction with GPA) explained 34% of the variance. Higher satisfaction was associated with: greater use of Merlin and email, more DL instructions from teachers, more internet use, more frequent help-seeking from parents (external and internal), greater use of effort regulation, repetition and practice, and self-handicapping strategies, being in earlier years of study, less frequent submission of assignments via DL, taking exams via DL, forum participation, less use of internal help-seeking from teachers, defensive pessimism, and focus on minimal requirements. Based on these findings, recommendations can be made to enhance self-regulated learning processes in DL environments.

Keywords: distance learning (DL), grade point average (GPA), satisfaction with GPA, self-regulated learning (SRL) processes



Abstract 4.12

Navigating Conflicting Feedback: Addressing Discrepancies in External Examiner Reports for Postgraduate Research

Nonhlanhla Maseko & Matjhabedi Mazibuko

The evaluation of postgraduate research often involves external examiners who provide critical feedback on dissertations and theses. However, conflicting comments from these examiners can pose significant challenges for both students and supervisors. This study investigates the nature and impact of such conflicting feedback, focusing on examination reports from multiple universities. Through a qualitative analysis of these reports, the research identifies common areas of disagreement, including methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks, and the interpretation of results. The findings reveal that conflicting comments can lead to increased stress for students, extended completion times, and potential compromises in the quality of research. Additionally, the role of supervisors becomes more complex as they mediate between students and examiners. The study highlights the need for clearer guidelines and improved communication between examiners to ensure more consistent and constructive feedback. Recommendations include the development of standardized feedback protocols and training programs for examiners to minimize conflicts. By addressing these issues, academic institutions can enhance the postgraduate supervision process and improve the overall quality of academic research. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into the specific challenges posed by conflicting examiner comments and offering practical solutions to mitigate their impact.

Keywords: conflicting comments, postgraduate research, discrepancies, external examiner



Abstract 4.13

Reflecting on the External Examination of Theses and Dissertations from Three South African Higher Education Institutions

Juliana Maria Smith

The criteria and processes underpinning the examination of PhD theses and Master's dissertations remain insufficiently understood and are often characterised by a lack of transparency. This paper aims to provide a reflective account of my experience as an examiner. A comparative analysis is made of the guidelines for evaluating theses and dissertations at three South African higher education institutions. My holistic assessment of the quality of the recently examined work was based on how well the students performed against the assessment criteria and the shortcomings. I draw on reflexive auto-ethnography as a qualitative research design to explore my experiences of externally examining post-graduate students' work. The examination refers to the implementation of qualitative research designs related to phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study research. I specifically highlight conflicting ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological perspectives in addressing research design choices. By illuminating examples of the examination of three theses and three dissertations in education, I show gaps in the theoretical underpinnings of the research designs and weaknesses in supervision; how the possibility of combining two research designs could be considered; and the resultant shortcomings in the

data analysis, as these issues were not coherently addressed. Two of the key findings are: firstly, that the students should be inducted into the philosophy and methodology of the research designs before they embark on the writing process; and secondly, that only academics experienced in phenomenology and grounded theory should be appointed as academics. The findings, albeit exploratory, can be useful to research supervisors, examiners, and postgraduate research students in fostering critical discourse on the imperative to adequately address the relevance of phenomenology and grounded research.

Keywords: reflexivity, auto-ethnography, external examination, assessment criteria, qualitative research designs, philosophy and methodology, grounded theory and phenomenology, thesis quality



Thematic Section 5. Law and Education

Abstract 5.1

Evaluation of Organisational DEI Strategic Implementation of a London-based University

Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu

This paper originated from completing a study with the University of Cambridge, UK, on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies and implementation in educational institutions. Although global initiatives exist, the legal aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), such as gender and ethnic minority representation in senior positions, remain unaddressed. This research focuses on recruitment practices, highlighting gender and ethnicity disparities in higher education, and offers recommendations for inclusive processes to address discrimination. Using observations, case studies, and literature, thematic analysis revealed gender disparities in senior positions at a UK higher education institution. The study suggests revisiting recruitment and selection practices to better include women and ethnic minorities in senior management positions. It also encourages these groups to apply for senior roles, given DEI and equal opportunity compliance in recruitment practices.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, gender and minority inequality, discrimination in recruitment and selection, management positions, higher education



Abstract 5.2

Assessing the Role of Education for Nigeria's Sustainable Economic Growth

Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu & Chinyere Uchenna Ordu

Education is a cornerstone of human capital development and a vital driver of Nigeria's sustainable economic growth (SEG). This exploratory research using endogenous economic growth theories examines the extent to which education providers in Nigeria align with the Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring quality education and equitable access. A well-functioning education system requires a relevant curriculum, adequately trained teachers, and alignment with labour market demands. However, Nigeria's education sector faces critical challenges, including a lack of basic skills, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, unqualified teachers, outdated curricula, and inconsistent government policies. These challenges contribute to a growing number of unemployable graduates and a widening skills gap. This study uses an empirical model to explore the intricate relationship between education, human capital formation, and economic development. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating triangulated quantitative and qualitative data, was used to comprehensively understand school management policies and their impact on SEG. Findings reveal that Nigeria has immense potential for sustained economic growth if strategic investments are made in education. A whole-school approach to quality education, emphasizing student-centred learning, updated assessment methods, and continuous teacher training, is crucial for preparing graduates to meet evolving labour market demands. Furthermore, insights from Finland's education system suggest adaptable strategies that could improve Nigeria's education policies and practices. This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting effective school management practices that enhance educational quality and drive economic progress. It recommends further empirical validation of the proposed model to develop actionable strategies for education reform, ensuring Nigeria's successful transition to a knowledge-driven economy.

Keywords: SEG, labour market, school management practices, quality education, mixed methods, Nigeria



Abstract 5.3

An Analysis of How International Students Engage in Social Media Platforms in Their Learning in UK Universities and the Benefits of Their Learning Experiences

Queen Chioma Nworgu

The author is researching how international students in UK higher education use social media platforms and their impact on learning experiences, motivation, and academic performance. This investigation is crucial due to the influence of social media on students' learning. The research focuses on UK international students and employs mixed methods to analyse their experiences, perceptions, and motivation, highlighting the impact of social media on their academic activities and performance. Social media has empowered students to participate in academic activities online, with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and LinkedIn becoming integral to their routines. This research will evaluate theoretical frameworks on online learning and social media engagement and their impact on students' academic performance. The study aims to investigate how international students studying in UK higher education use social media platforms to enhance their learning experiences, motivation to use a particular platform to improve academic performance, and adapt to a new educational context. The study aims to develop a framework for best practices for students across Greater London. The most important in presenting this paper is to gather feedback from the conference colleagues to refine the focus research, objectives, and questions.

Keywords: social media platforms, teaching and learning, international students' experience, ICT and higher education.



Thematic Section 6. Wellbeing in the School Ecosystem

Abstract 6.1

Education at a Crossroads: Current Challenges to School Counseling

Nikolay Popov

This paper conceptually examines, outlines, and discusses the various challenges that school counseling faces in today's transforming educational landscape. Depending on their specifics, some challenges can be considered problems and are referred to as "Sisyphus challenges". In contrast, others can be seen as opportunities and are referred to as "Aurora challenges". The author's arguments are chiefly based on analyzing published research and recent blogs on school counseling in Europe and the USA. The paper asserts that to assist students and education specialists in prospering in the 21st century and ultimately contribute to shaping the trajectory of education for generations to come, the challenges to school counseling as a foundation of school systems should be discussed. Sisyphus challenges to school counseling, discussed in this paper, are 1) varied and compounded students' needs, 2) balancing different types of support, 3) tiring workload, 4) lack of resources and funding, 5) barriers to advocacy, and 6) preparing for the job market. Aurora challenges, outlined in the paper, are 1) digital technology integration and the use of artificial intelligence, 2) improving collaboration with teachers to boost personalized education, 3) extensive interaction, 4) clarifying the role, 5) from quietness to resonance, and 6) comparing internationally. All the above-listed challenges are metaphorically named. In the conclusion, the author defends that despite the theoretical character of this paper, addressing and discussing the challenges can help school-based counseling come forward and be more effective.

Keywords: school counseling, student needs, balancing support, counselor workload, AI in school counseling, roles of school counselors, school systems



Abstract 6.2

Improving Wellbeing in Schools: The Role of School Social Work in Germany and the Necessity of Its Implementation in Türkiye

Betül Çolak & Kathrin Franziska Beck

School social work is practised in more than 50 countries worldwide. It focuses on social work practices in schools to protect children from risks such as poverty, neglect, abuse, domestic violence, bullying,

mental health issues, and low academic achievement. Providing support at an early stage is crucial for fostering healthy individuals and a stable society. This presentation will begin by examining school social work in Germany before considering its potential implementation in Türkiye. While school social work has not yet been introduced in Türkiye, Germany has a long history of providing social work services in schools. Key aspects of this practice in Germany will be presented, including its legislative foundation, target groups, and methods. Additionally, the role of school social work in improving wellbeing in German schools will be highlighted. Subsequently, the presentation will evaluate the necessity and significance of school social work in Türkiye, discuss preliminary studies on its introduction, and compare the situation in Türkiye with that in Germany. Currently, there is no school social work system in Türkiye, and children face increasing risks due to recent economic and political changes. The number of children affected by these risks is increasing every year. Therefore, implementing school social work in Türkiye is essential.

Keywords: school social work, Germany, Türkiye, wellbeing, school, child neglect, child abuse, poverty, bullying



Abstract 6.3

Mental Wellbeing of Students in South African Universities: A Capabilities Approach

Oliver Tafadzwa Gore

University students, especially undergraduate ones, are reported to be more susceptible to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression than adults in the general population. Although the adverse consequences of mental health challenges are well-documented, limited attention has been paid to these issues in the post-COVID-19 context, particularly within the South African higher education landscape, where the prevalence of mental health challenges is high. This study investigates how final-year students at a South African university navigate mental wellbeing within a capabilities framework. A qualitative research methodology was employed using five focus group discussions and 15 in-depth interviews to gather data from final-year students across all eight university faculties. Grounded in a capabilities approach, this study argues that when students have freedoms and agency in the various dimensions of their mental wellbeing, they can deal with the challenges they encounter and thus contribute to the enhancement of their psychosocial wellbeing. Findings of this study indicate that students had varying freedoms in the following capabilities: emotional regulation, resilience, social networks, mental health knowledge, and access to psychosocial services. As a result, some struggled to manage their psychosocial wellbeing. Conversion factors such as inadequate funding, academic pressure, failure to strike a balance between social and academic work, personal and family problems, and inaccessible mental health services diminished students' freedoms in these areas. The results of this study have implications for the ways universities address students' mental wellbeing challenges.

Keywords: mental health, psychosocial wellbeing of students, capabilities approach, higher education, South Africa



Abstract 6.4

When the Mind Speaks Differently: Trauma, Neurodiversity, and the Psychology of Healing

Kemoneilwe Metsing

Neurodiverse children, those with conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and other cognitive differences, often experience trauma in ways that are misunderstood or overlooked. Their unique neurological wiring influences how they perceive, process, and express distress, which can make traditional trauma assessments and interventions less effective. In South Africa, where socio-economic disparities, community violence, and educational inequalities are prevalent, neurodiverse children face compounded risks. These children are not only more vulnerable to trauma but are also less likely to receive appropriate psychological support due to systemic gaps in mental health services and inclusive education. This paper explores the intersection of neurodiversity and trauma, focusing on how neurodiverse children in South Africa and globally navigate psychological healing. Employing a qualitative research design centered on lived experience, this paper utilizes a phenomenological approach to examine trauma through personal narratives, case studies, and thematic analysis. It integrates a literature review with empirical case analyses, drawing on interviews, autobiographical accounts, and testimonies to provide a human-centered and culturally sensitive understanding of neurodiverse trauma responses. The paper examines how trauma manifests differently in these children, the barriers they face in accessing care, and the importance of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and neuro-affirming approaches. Neuroscientific research shows that trauma can alter brain development and emotional regulation, particularly in early childhood, making early intervention critical. Drawing on international research and South African case studies, the study highlights innovative practices in therapy, education, and community support that honor neurodiverse ways of being. It also calls for a shift in psychological frameworks to better accommodate diverse cognitive profiles, advocating for inclusive and decolonial mental health policies and practitioner training. By amplifying the voices of children whose minds “speak differently”, this research aims to advance a deeper understanding of trauma and healing that transcends diagnostic labels and embraces neurodiversity as a vital part of human experience.

Keywords: neurodiversity, trauma, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, psychological healing, South Africa, inclusive education, mental health



Abstract 6.5

Child and Youth Care Workers' Advocacy for Foster Children with Academic Challenges

Lina Mmakgabo Methi

Child and youth care workers caring for foster children with special educational needs frequently face significant challenges in navigating the educational system to secure appropriate academic support and

advocate for children's fundamental rights. This qualitative, single-case study explores child and youth care workers' lived experiences, challenges, and learner support strategies through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, which provides valuable insights into fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness among foster children. Data were collected via a focus group interview with six child and youth care workers and a semi-structured interview with the program coordinator from a children's facility in a marginalised community. Deductive thematic analysis identified four primary themes: (1) systemic barriers, (2) insufficient caregiver training on advocacy effectiveness, (3) challenges of advocacy within the setting, and (4) advocacy in networking with local service providers. The findings underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms, including enhanced institutional transparency, caregiver education initiatives, and expanded access to support services. This study contributes to our understanding of child and youth care workers' experiences regarding the educational needs of foster children, highlighting the challenges in accessing appropriate and timely educational support systems. Additionally, the research emphasises the critical need for policies that promote an inclusive and equitable educational landscape, ultimately supporting the developmental needs of all children.

Keywords: children with special needs, educational advocacy, systemic barriers, child and youth care workers' resilience, marginalised communities, inclusive education



Abstract 6.6

The Emotional Landscape of High-Stakes Testing: Insights from the Experiences of 8th-Grade Students in Istanbul and Hatay

Aydın Kaan Şenel

In Turkey, admission to selective high schools requires students to achieve high scores on a one-time, time-pressured, high-stakes exam called the Exam for Transition to High School (LGS). While not mandatory, the majority of 8th-grade students take the LGS each year to enhance their chances of gaining admission to selective high schools. Existing literature, both in Turkey and globally, often examines high-stakes testing through adult-centric lenses, privileging the perspectives of parents and teachers or relying on structured surveys. This study addresses these limitations by centering children's voices through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and artifact analysis. Using qualitative data collected from 8th-grade students in Istanbul and Hatay—one of the provinces most affected by the February 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes—this research asks: What emotions/feelings do 8th graders experience during the exam preparation year, and what are the reasons behind the various emotions associated with the exam year? Findings reveal that the experience of LGS preparation did not primarily stem from the exam's potential academic consequences or its structural features, but rather from the social and relational pressures surrounding it, both in its challenges and its sources of support. Informed by the stories of children in two different contexts, this presentation specifically highlights the profound influence of family and peer relationships in shaping children's experiences of high-stakes exams. These findings reveal that students' experiences were marked by high pressure and expectations, primarily from families, often leading to increased involvement and inevitable conflict, coupled with students' concerns about family investments and their strong desire to make them proud. Additionally, friends emerged as a significant source of competition, comparison, and expectation. Crucially, however, the support from

family and friends also played a vital buffering role against these challenges. These findings challenge the tendency to reduce exam-related experiences to test anxiety alone and offer a more holistic understanding of the impact of high-stakes testing on children’s experiences. The study argues for a shift from individual- or performance-focused analyses toward a relational and contextual understanding of high-stakes testing and its potential consequences for children’s wellbeing.

Keywords: high-stakes testing, child wellbeing, transition to high school, exam anxiety, LGS, education in Turkey



Thematic Section 7. Sustainability in Education

Abstract 7.1

Present and Future of Lifelong Learning in Türkiye within the Framework of the 12th Development Plan (2024–2028)

Onur Seçkin

In Türkiye, Development Plans are key policy documents published every five years since 1963 by the government, outlining the country’s medium and long-term development goals. The 12th Development Plan (2024–2028) is structured around five pivotal axes: “Stable Growth, Robust Economy”, “Competitive Production through Green and Digital Transformation”, “Qualified People, Strong Families, Healthy Society”, “Disaster-Resilient Habitats, Sustainable Environment”, and “Democratic Good Governance Based on Justice”. This study analyzes how lifelong learning (LLL) is represented, framed, and discussed in the 12th Development Plan, the first plan published after the centenary of the Republic. The study conducts a document analysis of the Plan through thematic content analysis and seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) In which developmental domains is LLL situated in the Plan? 2) For what purposes is LLL framed within the Plan? 3) What are the key policy and implementation goals related to LLL emphasized in the Plan? 4) Which target groups are identified and prioritized for LLL? and 5) Which stakeholders are defined as partners in achieving LLL-related goals? This study is among the first to analyze the 12th Development Plan with LLL. Based on the findings, it discusses the current state of LLL in Türkiye, assesses the alignment between policy goals and societal needs, and offers recommendations for policymakers.

Keywords: lifelong learning, Development Plans in Türkiye, education policy



Abstract 7.2

How Sustainability Concepts Are Embedded in the Maarif Educational Model

Pelin Sidal & Yelkin Diker Coşkun

This study investigates the extent to which sustainability is integrated into the Maarif Model Middle School curricula (Grades 5–8) in Türkiye. In the study, document review as a form of descriptive research techniques was used, and examined curriculum documents in subjects such as Science, Mathematics, Turkish, Social Studies, Quran, Life of the Prophet, and Religious Culture and Ethics. Literacy skills, learning outcomes and process components, content framework, concepts, evidence of learning (assessment and evaluation), basic assumptions, pre-assessment process, bridging, learning-teaching practices, enrichment, supporting curriculum components, and content analysis were carried out through document review, and sustainability-related concepts and expressions were searched. Findings of the study indicated that the integration of sustainability is both limited and fragmented. Although the theme of sustainability is systematically included in Science from grades 5 to 8, it only addresses environmental sustainability. Other disciplines such as Mathematics, Social Sciences, Turkish, and Religious Culture largely neglect sustainability themes, especially interdisciplinary dimensions such as ethics, social justice, and economic aspects. As a result, the curriculum presents sustainability narrowly as a scientific subject and lacks a holistic and integrated perspective. While the model partially aligns with some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to environmental sustainability, it fails to adequately address broader goals such as quality education, social equality, and responsible consumption. This limited alignment reflects a missed opportunity to position sustainability as a comprehensive and interdisciplinary educational goal. The study concludes that the Maarif Model takes a fragmented and discipline-specific approach to sustainability rather than a holistic or interdisciplinary approach, and recommends stronger curriculum integration across all subjects.

Keywords: Maarif Model, middle school, sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals



Abstract 7.3

Short Overview of Country Performance on Ecology and Sustainability Topics in TIMSS: Reflections on Curriculum Implementation

Yelkin Diker Coşkun, Öykü Erinç Küçüköz & Deniz Ayşe Orun Taneli

This study aims to examine country performances on ecology and sustainability questions about the average achievement scores in the 2011, 2015, and 2019 TIMSS assessments. The study employs the document analysis method, one of the descriptive research methodologies, and analyzes countries' performances by comparing their success rates across various identified question categories and themes. The findings indicate significant differences among countries in terms of environmental awareness, ecological literacy, and science education. Countries such as South Korea, Finland, Japan, Singapore, and Russia have demonstrated consistent or improving performance over time in environmental awareness and ecosystem knowledge. These countries' curricula appear to emphasize hands-on science education, nature observation, and laboratory activities. Conversely, countries with the lowest

performance (e.g., Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran) tend to have educational systems where environmental awareness and science education receive less emphasis. These results suggest that national science curricula significantly reflect and impact performance in these areas. Comparative analyses like these are becoming increasingly important for understanding and enhancing national and international educational policies related to ecology and sustainability.

Keywords: TIMSS, ecology, sustainability, curriculum



Thematic Section 8. Teaching and Learning Experiences and AI

Abstract 8.1

The Effect of Artificial Intelligence-Supported Materials on Academic Achievement in English Teaching

Cem Aksiner & Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoglu

This research investigates the effect of artificial intelligence-supported instructional materials on students' academic achievement in the English language preparatory program at a university. A quasi-experimental research design was employed in this study to investigate the effectiveness of instructional methods on students' academic achievement. The study compared two groups. The Traditional group (n=392) received English instruction through Web 2.0 tools, while the experimental group (n=352) was taught using AI-supported learning platforms. The academic performance was measured using the University Proficiency of Academic English (OPAE) exam. The results indicated that students in the AI-supported group (M=44.81, SD=14.51) performed statistically significantly higher than students in the Web 2.0 group (M=36.20, SD=17.30), $t(742) = 7.31, p < .01$. This finding highlights the superior efficacy of AI-supported instructional materials in enhancing students' academic outcomes compared to traditional Web 2.0 instructional tools. The findings emphasize the importance of artificial intelligence-supported materials that provide feedback, tailored instruction, and an adaptive learning environment. The study's conclusion emphasizes that language instruction enriched by artificial intelligence results in far better learning outcomes compared to Web 2.0 tools. In addition, performance disparity between the genders was looked into, and the AI-supported education group exhibited a narrower gender gap. This seems to stem from the way such systems work; they create a type of individualized learning experience. The other point is that the AI-enhanced systems get the students more actively engaged with the materials. When the systems are used properly, they lead to a kind of 'student ownership' of the learning experience.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, language learning, academic achievement, Web 2.0 tools, AI-supported education, personalized learning, adaptive learning, English proficiency

This study was derived from the master's thesis conducted by Cem Aksiner under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Gonca Kızılkaya Cumaoğlu.



Abstract 8.2

Navigating Ethical Crossroads: How AI Ethics Shape OECD, UNESCO, International Baccalaureate, and Turkish National Curriculum Frameworks

Meltem İpek Öner & İrem Didem Saygan

This study critically examines curricular representations of artificial intelligence (AI) ethics within prominent national and international educational frameworks, guided by a unified ethical model encompassing five core principles: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability. Through a detailed document analysis based on established AI ethics frameworks, the research investigates how these ethical principles are integrated into four influential curriculum guides: the OECD 2030 Competency Framework, UNESCO's AI Competency Framework for Students, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Theory of Knowledge (TOK) curriculum guide, and the Turkish National Curriculum Guide. Findings reveal varying degrees and modes of ethical representation across the frameworks. The IB TOK curriculum provides robust epistemological inquiry but lacks explicit integration of AI-specific ethical dimensions. Conversely, the TCMM prominently emphasizes values-based education yet inadequately addresses epistemological reflections related to AI. The OECD and UNESCO frameworks offer comprehensive guidelines for AI ethics and literacy, but show gaps in practical implementation strategies within educational settings. In response to these insights, this research proposes targeted recommendations aimed at enhancing the curricular integration of AI ethics. It underscores the importance of cultivating ethically reflective and epistemologically informed learners prepared to effectively navigate the ethical complexities of an increasingly AI-driven world, aligning with the urgent educational crossroads highlighted by contemporary global educational transformations.

Keywords: artificial intelligence in education, AI literacy in education, curriculum frameworks, International Education, Comparative Education



Abstract 8.3

Evaluation of Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Terms of Children's Rights Based on Parental Views

Çağla Banko-Bal & Berrin Akman

This study aims to evaluate artificial intelligence (AI) technologies from the perspective of parents about children's rights. The research adopts a qualitative case study design, involving 32 parents from various regions of Turkey. Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire designed to explore parents' awareness, perceptions, and concerns regarding the use of AI in children's lives. The responses were analyzed using content analysis. The findings reveal a complex and nuanced understanding of AI among parents. While a majority express optimism about the potential benefits of AI—particularly in fields such

as education, safety, healthcare, and individualized learning—many also raise serious concerns. These include threats to data privacy, loss of human interaction, surveillance-related stress, and the risk of technology addiction. Several parents emphasize the importance of adult supervision and ethical regulation in the use of AI tools involving children. Others underline the need to protect children from being overly exposed to algorithmic decision-making, which may limit their freedom, autonomy, or emotional development. Interestingly, some participants perceive AI as a double-edged sword: a potentially transformative tool if used responsibly, yet harmful if left unchecked. There is also a recurring theme around the lack of adequate information and public guidance regarding AI and its implications for children's rights. In conclusion, parents exhibit a cautious yet open attitude toward AI technologies. Their views reflect both hope and concern, highlighting the need for comprehensive legal, educational, and ethical frameworks that prioritize children's well-being. The study emphasizes that safeguarding children's rights in the age of AI requires not only technological innovation but also critical reflection and inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders, including families.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, children's rights, early years



Abstract 8.4

AI as Pedagogical Partner: Examining Pre-Service English Teachers' Reflections on Instructional Design Across Varying AI Integration Levels

Evrım Eveyik-Aydın & Zeynep Koçođlu

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into educational practice, teacher education programs are beginning to explore how tools like ChatGPT can support or reshape instructional planning. This study examines how pre-service English language teachers approach three modes of lesson planning: AI-generated (automated output without human intervention), AI-assisted (interactive planning through dialogic prompting and critical selection), and human-designed (lesson plans created independently without AI support). The research focuses on how these planning experiences influence participants' pedagogical autonomy, creativity, and professional identity, while also evaluating the instructional quality of the resulting lessons. Fourteen senior pre-service teachers enrolled in a practicum course participated in the present study, creating three lesson plans to implement in their cooperating schools based on learners' age and proficiency levels. Data were collected through reflective evaluation reports, open-ended questions, screenshots of their AI interaction, and semi-structured focus group interviews, and were analyzed thematically. Findings and the implications of the study will be discussed in detail during the presentation.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), AI-assisted lesson planning, ChatGPT, pre-service teacher education, professional identity, teacher autonomy



Abstract 8.5

Research Study on Rawan Online School (ROS): A Resilient Approach to Girls' Education in Afghanistan

Mustafa Ramazan

In Afghanistan, where prolonged conflict, regressive policies, and systemic gender discrimination have excluded an estimated 80% of school-aged girls from formal education, Rawan Online School (ROS) has emerged as a groundbreaking solution. Founded by an Afghan educator with a doctorate in educational leadership, ROS delivers the national curriculum digitally in Dari and, in the future, in Pashto, prioritizing accessibility, safety, and quality for marginalized girls. This study evaluates ROS's model through a mixed-methods analysis of academic outcomes, platform engagement, and caregiver feedback, contextualized within Afghanistan's socio-political challenges. ROS's platform, optimized for low-bandwidth environments, serves over 1,200 students across Afghanistan and diaspora communities in Pakistan, Iran, and Türkiye. In 2024-2025, 42 girls graduated through ROS, with 92% achieving scores in their mid-term and final exams. Qualitative interviews with caregivers revealed that 94% of families chose ROS due to safety concerns, citing risks such as harassment, inadequate sanitation in physical schools, and restrictive cultural norms. Furthermore, 87% of respondents praised ROS's culturally sensitive content, which aligns with local values while integrating global pedagogical practices. Technological innovation underpins ROS's success. Despite challenges such as device scarcity and intermittent connectivity, ROS's offline content library has reached 580 students in conflict zones, demonstrating its scalability in crisis contexts. ROS's leadership training modules, informed by the founder's research on Afghan school governance, have also empowered educators to adopt gender-responsive teaching practices. This aligns with UNICEF's call for localized solutions to address Afghanistan's teacher shortage, which currently leaves 55% of schools understaffed. However, systemic barriers persist. Poverty limits device ownership, with 63% of ROS families relying on shared mobile phones. The study concludes that ROS offers a replicable model for conflict-affected regions, blending technological adaptability with cultural competence. Recommendations include expanding hybrid (online/offline) infrastructure, prioritizing gender-responsive ed-tech design, and scaling ROS's learning framework. Longitudinal research is necessary to evaluate the long-term effects on access to tertiary education and economic participation.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Rawan Online School (ROS), resilient approach, girls' education

Last-minute added

Abstract

Multilingual Education at a Crossroads: Global Insights and South Africa's Language-in-Education Policy

Marius Smit

Language-in-education policy is crucial to educational outcomes, identity formation, and social cohesion. South Africa, with its 11 official languages, faces ongoing obstacles in effectively implementing a multilingual policy. This article examines global best practices and international case studies to determine their applicability to the South African context. The dominance of English as a Language of Teaching and Learning (LoTL) continues to hinder the advancement of indigenous languages, resulting in negative impacts on literacy and academic achievement. Various court cases highlighting political opposition to Afrikaans schools and the recently enacted Basic Education Laws Amendment Acts are discussed, which confirms the trend to undermine the autonomy of governing bodies to determine school language policies. The research identifies inadequate teacher preparation, societal preference for English, and resource scarcity as the main obstacles to teaching indigenous languages. A key insight includes the benefits of structured bilingual education as demonstrated by the positive outcomes of the Eastern Cape's Mother-Tongue Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) initiatives, which extend the use of isiXhosa and Sesotho as mediums of instruction beyond Grade 3. Recommendations include extending mother-tongue instruction, improving teacher training programs, developing bilingual learning materials, and fostering public awareness of the academic and cognitive advantages of multilingual education. At this crossroads in education, the path of mother-tongue instruction leads to comprehension and empowerment, the other to generations lost in translation.

Keywords: multilingual education, South Africa, language-in-education policy

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