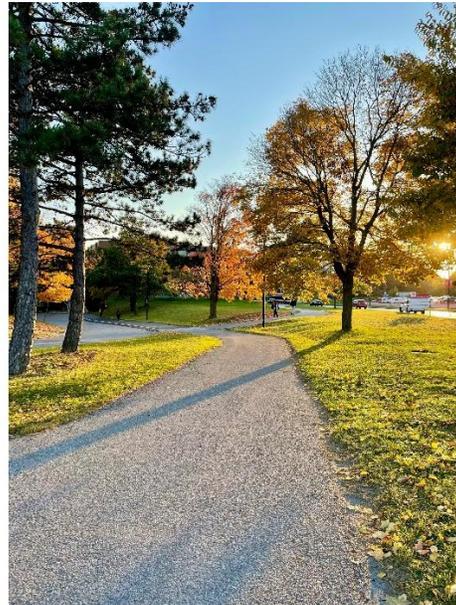




Call for Papers:
Special issue for the Nordic
Journal of Comparative and
International Education
(NJCIE)

Title:

**Rethinking Girls' Education in Shifting
Worlds: Dialogues Across
Perspectives, Contexts, and
Knowledges**



Guest editor: Norin Taj, Athabasca University (Canada)

Rationale and Framing

Over the past three decades, girls' education has become central to global development agendas, widely recognized as a driver for improving health outcomes, lowering fertility rates, advancing economic growth, and supporting more inclusive civic systems (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; Unterhalter, 2023). However, dominant narratives run the risk of reducing girls' education to a technical intervention narrowly focused on enrolment numbers and economic productivity, particularly in Global South contexts where much of this work is concentrated. Such instrumental framings often fail to engage with the complex social, political, and cultural conditions that shape girls' educational experiences.

Conversations around girls' education frequently begin with the goal of expanding access, a focus central to development discourse. However, critical scholars have long argued that increasing girls' enrolment in formal schooling alone cannot address deeper structures of gender inequality, as educational disparities are shaped by broader social, cultural, and political inequalities (Stromquist, 1995). As schools reproduce social status and advantages across generations (Bourdieu, 1984; Collins, 1979), increased enrolment alone cannot dismantle these entrenched inequalities and may, in fact, perpetuate them. While the World Bank reports that many countries have technically achieved gender parity in primary enrolment, significant disparities in gender equality persist, demonstrating once again that parity does not automatically translate into equal learning outcomes or meaningful gender justice (Murphy-Graham, 2024).

Beyond questions of access, girls' education also involves the quality of schooling, curricular content, the nature of learning environments, and the everyday norms and relationships that shape educational trajectories. Feminist and postcolonial scholars have long challenged dominant frameworks for overlooking how education intersects with gender, class, race, and colonial legacies (Baily, 2024; Khurshid, 2017; Shah, 2015;). Recent research (Durrani & Halai, 2020; Holmarsdottir et al., 2013; Iddy, 2021; Khoja-Moolji, 2018) shows that policy approaches often prioritize specific objectives in girls' education while giving uneven attention to the complex socio-economic and political contexts shaping girls' lives. Feminist scholars have consistently highlighted the epistemic asymmetries embedded in global education policy and research (de Sousa Santos, 2014), calling for relational and intersectional frameworks that situate girls' education, and the very category of 'girls,' within both everyday lived realities and broader structural conditions.

Finally, as these debates unfold, we are witnessing significant global shifts: rising authoritarianism, anti-gender political discourse, and post-pandemic disruptions to schooling and care work (UNICEF, 2021); alongside a growing focus on artificial intelligence and digital skills (UNESCO, 2024); and declining international aid for gender-focused education (United Nations, 2025). These challenges make it all the more urgent to refocus critical conversations about girls' education—not only to challenge reductive and technical framings but to engage deeply with the evolving structural, political, and cultural dynamics shaping girls' educational experiences and possibilities today. This special issue seeks to provide a timely, interdisciplinary space where scholars and practitioners can grapple with these complexities and foster meaningful dialogue and collaboratively make sense of current realities while envisioning collective futures.

Focus and Scope

We invite contributions on pressing questions that demand our attention as we confront new political, technological, and environmental realities, particularly from early-career scholars and practitioners across the Global South and North. Contributions might address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- ❖ What questions should we be asking about girls' education at this moment of global shifts?
- ❖ What kinds of futures are we envisioning for gender equality in education?
- ❖ What knowledges, experiences, and voices need to be centred to imagine more just and inclusive possibilities?
- ❖ How do we move beyond inherited frameworks and create space for diverse ways of knowing, being, and learning?
- ❖ With rising uncertainties and inequalities, what roles can education play in supporting girls' agency and futures?
- ❖ How might policies, communities, and scholars engage in these conversations in ways that open for justice and transformation across diverse contexts?

Submission Guidelines

We welcome contributions in a range of forms, including scholarly articles, essays, and artistic or creative works that engage critically with the themes of this special issue.

A number of invited manuscripts addressing the themes of this special issue are currently under review. Authors are encouraged to engage with these works in their submissions. Draft versions of invited manuscripts are available upon request by contacting the Guest Editor at [contact info] with a brief description (approximately 500 words) of their proposed contribution.

Authors interested in contributing to this special issue should submit a full manuscript on the [NJCIE platform](#) by

September 1, 2026

Please ensure compliance with the [NJCIE Author Guidelines](#) in your submitted manuscript. Upon submission, please make a comment that the manuscript is considered for this special issue. Papers will undergo a double-blind review process. The authors are encouraged to suggest two or three potential peer reviewers in their Cover letter.

Accepted manuscripts will be published as soon as they are ready through the production phase. Publication of the complete special issue by 1 June 2027.

Inquiries

Please direct all inquiries to the Special Issue Editor:

Norin Taj (ntaj@athabascau.ca)

Literature

Baily, S. (2024). Rethinking Our Embrace of Decolonization: A Slippery Slope Leading to Nationalist Ideologies and Agendas. *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education 2023*, 48, 81-97.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-367920240000048006>

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Collins, R. (1979). *The credential society: An historical sociology of education and stratification*. Academic Press.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2015). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

Durrani, N., & Halai, A. (2020). Gender equality, education, and development: Tensions between global, national, and local policy discourses in postcolonial contexts. In A. Wulff (Ed.), *Grading Goal Four: Tensions, Threats, and Opportunities in the Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education* (pp. 65-95). BRILL.

https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004430365_003

Holmarsdottir, H. B., Nomlomo, V., Farag, A. I., & Desai, Z. (Eds.). (2013). *Gendered voices: Reflections on gender and education in South Africa and Sudan* (Vol. 23). Springer Science & Business Media.

- Iddy, H. (2023). Changing perceptions of the value of girls' secondary education among the parents in rural Tanzania. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(10), 2156-2176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.1982048>
- Khoja-Moolji, S. (2018). *Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia*. University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780520970533>
- Khurshid, A. (2017). Does education empower women? The regulated empowerment of Parhi Likhi women in Pakistan. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 48(3), 252-268. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12198>
- Monkman, K., & Hoffman, L. (2013). Girls' education: The power of policy discourse. *Theory and Research in Education*, 11(1), 63-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878512468384>
- Murphy-Graham, E. (2024). From Girls' Education to Gender-Transformative Education: Lessons from Different Nations. *Daedalus*, 153(4), 267-285. https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_02115
- Shah, P. (2015). Spaces to speak: Photovoice and the reimagination of girls' education in India. *Comparative Education Review*, 59(1), 50-74. <https://doi.org/10.1086/678699>
- Stromquist, N. P. (1995). Romancing the state: Gender and power in education. *Comparative education review*, 39(4), 423-454. <https://doi.org/10.1086/447339>
- UNESCO. (2024). *Artificial intelligence in education*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/artificial-intelligence>
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2021, March 2). *COVID-19 and school closures: One year of education disruption*. UNICEF. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/one-year-of-covid-19-and-school-closures/>
- United Nations. (2025, February 5). Global education crisis deepens as USAID funding cuts threaten progress. *United Nations*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1160631>
- Unterhalter, E. (2019). The many meanings of quality education: Politics of targets and indicators in SDG 4. *Global Policy*, 10, 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12591>
- Unterhalter, E. (2023). An answer to everything? Four framings of girls' schooling and gender equality in education. *Comparative Education*, 59(2), 145-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2023.2202374>
- Unterhalter, E., Longlands, H., & Peppin Vaughan, R. (2022). Gender and intersecting inequalities in education: Reflections on a framework for measurement. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 23(4), 509-538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2022.2090523>