



Call for papers

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

Title:

**Constructing and Comparing
Learning Outcomes in Europe:
Factors, actors, and spaces**

Guest editors:

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Background

Discussions of the outcomes of education and learning processes are recurrent in education research and comparative studies. Ever since the introduction of international large-scale assessments, the paradigm of quantification has dominated the public, policy, and academic discourse on education. Countries that scored 'high' in the assessed subjects, particularly Nordic countries, have become role models and forerunners in the educational reforms that consisted in growing educational monitoring alongside improved cooperation between education research and education policy (Klieme et al., 2010; Krejsler & Moos, 2023).

On the global scale, studies aiming at measuring and improving the performance of education systems have proliferated (EACEA et al., 2022; OECD, 2008). Similarly, critical surveys on the actual impact of large-scale assessments on education quality (Enchikova et al., 2024; Gorur, 2016; Rowley et al., 2019) have evidenced that the measurement of learning outcomes has facilitated a limited understanding of learning that is narrowed down to quantifiable indicators incapable of accounting for the multifarious contextual elements involved in their construction.

Rationale

The current concepts of learning outcomes have proven to be insufficient to tackle issues related to the disproportionate levels of education quality (Stanley, 2015). On the one hand, there is poor evidence that regular assessments automatically translate into better learning outcomes. On the other hand, assessments often focus on a limited scope of skills and competencies gained in the formal education

(reading, math, science), while excluding unquantifiable skills acquired in informal and non-formal educational settings. Finally, the measurements are based on individualised indicators which shift the responsibility for success (and failure) in education on learners alone. Such development not only decontextualises the unique intersectional, structural, and spatial (dis)positions of learners, but risks turning systemic problems into individual shortcomings (Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka, 2019). In that regard, a more holistic and context-sensitive approach to learning outcomes is imperative.

The Special Issue seeks to contribute to the scholarly debates by examining how various factors, actors, and spaces enter the interplay of constructing learning outcomes: How do local/regional contexts and opportunity structures shape educational pathways? To what extent do various educational stakeholder groups connect to support learning processes? What is the role of spaces in ensuring just and accessible education?

The addressed issues are particularly interesting from an international and comparative perspective as they shed light on the role of local and regional contexts in the provision of educational opportunities. The Special Issue, therefore, invites contributions that compare the construction of learning outcomes across different local sites to highlight their intertwining horizontal and vertical relations with global discourses, national frameworks, and individual life courses.

Focus and Scope

For this Special Issue, we invite scholars to submit original research articles, case studies, and theoretical papers that engage with the following themes:

- Analyses of the conceptual understandings and uses of learning outcomes.
- Quantitative and qualitative studies on the spatial dimension of education and learning outcomes.
- Cross-regional and cross-national analyses of local/regional opportunity structures impacting learning outcomes.
- Individual-level analyses focusing groups most affected by (under)achievement.
- Comparative analyses on the cooperation between various educational stakeholders.
- Analyses that address the relationality of spaces and educational and learning outcomes.

Submission Guidelines

Authors interested in contributing to this special issue should submit a full first manuscript by

28 February 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 be selected through an open call and 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 October 2026.

Inquiries

Please direct all submissions and inquiries to the Special Issue Editors:

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