

Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (hereinafter DEI) is an important topic across various disciplines including education. Following Arsel et al. (2022) *diversity* “refers broadly to real or perceived physical or socio-cultural differences attributed to people and the representation of these differences in different spaces”, including educational institutions; *equity* relates to “fairness in the treatment of people in terms of both opportunity and outcome”; *inclusion* refers to “creating a culture that fosters belonging and incorporation of diverse groups” (ibid., p. 920). Gender is acknowledged as one, of many other (e.g., body, age, race, ethnicity, social class and religion) contours that is part of DEI practices and discourses.

Within education, gender DEI is a central topic. Indeed, education is theorised as a fundamental human right and a driver of socio-economic development. To this end, United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are committed to the pursuit of eliminating gender disparities (Goal 4, United Nations, 2015). In this context, organisations like UNESCO and UNICEF lead initiatives that have significantly reduced gender disparities in school enrolment, thus promoting inclusive and equitable quality education. Moreover, in many regions, girls now outperform boys in literacy-related domains.

Notwithstanding the above, gender still acts as a contour that shapes access, participation, achievement, and professional trajectories (Kroese, 2025; Lin et al., 2024). Evidence from developed educational systems discloses comparatively lower engagement and higher dropout rates among boys, often associated with dominant constructions of masculinity that devalue academic commitment (e.g., OECD, 2025). Women also remain overrepresented in cultural fields and

social sciences in some countries (e.g., Greece, Italy), while men predominate in engineering, information technology, and certain natural sciences (ibid.). Such patterns reflect the internalization of gendered expectations and the subtle reproduction of symbolic power within educational settings (Bourdieu, 1989).

In this light, there are calls for creating empowering and inclusive educational spaces that embrace diverse identities and experiences of students and move beyond such power asymmetries in all levels of education (cf. Chaudhry & Priola, 2025; Sai et al., 2024). We use the term *educational space* to understand how gender is enacted within educational settings. Educational spaces usually materialized as masculine entities (Panayiotou, 2015), with such a conceptualization to become part not only of teaching and learning practices (e.g., rational vs reflexive thinking), but also of embodied subjectivities (e.g., adapting student identity to fit or resisting an identity to think beyond existing norms).

To illuminate this, research emphasises that classroom dynamics, such as teacher/professor expectations, participation patterns, and peer interactions, are often shaped by gendered assumptions regarding competence, behavior, and leadership (Kroese, 2025). Moreover, despite broader legislative progress concerning LGBTQ+ rights, school environments do not consistently provide inclusive and protective frameworks for gender-diverse students. Heteronormative assumptions and insufficient systematic teacher training continue to limit the effective implementation of inclusive policies (Antonelli & Sembiente, 2022).

In this issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Education Theory and Research* (JCETR) we host papers that zoom into such relations between gender and education. Specially, the

papers included in this issue approach distinct dimensions of gender in different levels of education through diverse pedagogical, sociocultural, and quantitative perspectives:

Vassiliki Pliogou traces four waves of feminism in the Greek context and situates those within national and international political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. The study also maps the development of Gender Studies in Greece as an evolving academic field, emphasizing its contribution to educational theory and practice, as well as to broader political and social transformations.

Zoe Konstantinidou and *Maria Papandreou* present a case study conducted in a public kindergarten (ages 4–6) exploring the impact of spatial and material modifications on children’s engagement in constructive play. Drawing on systematic observations across three phases, baseline, intervention (informed by the Mosaic approach), and post-intervention, the study shows increased participation, particularly among girls. The findings highlight the role of enriched materials and child-centered spatial design in fostering inclusive learning environments that mitigate gendered play patterns.

Aikaterini A. Tsaridou, *Dafni Petkou*, *Michail Vitoulis*, and *Nikolaos Panagiotou* explore gender representations in children’s audiovisual media (e.g., cartoons, series, and advertisements) and their role in the construction of gender identity during early childhood. Following poststructuralist and sociocultural frameworks, this study highlights how such media form children’s understandings of gender roles. To this end, the pedagogical potential of critical literacy practices is disclosed for promoting equality and inclusion in education.

Dimitrios Kravvaris conducts a longitudinal quantitative analysis of gender representation in Computer Science PhD programs in Greece (1983–2025), based on 2,474 dissertations. The findings reveal a persistent gender imbalance (21.85% women; 78.15% men), alongside a gradual increase in female participation—from 10% (1983–1987) to 31.68% (2023–2025). Linear regression analysis confirms a statistically significant upward trend (0.51% annually, $p < 0.01$), indicating steady yet limited progress toward gender parity.

Avgeri Anastasia, *Mantziou Maria*, and *Pedouli Alexandra* provide a literature review on gender and school bullying in the context of secondary education. Their study zooms into different perceptions, forms of manifestation and strategies of reaction to bullying by boys and girls. The analysis highlights the need for targeted educational policies and teacher-mediated interventions to address diverse forms of aggression and cultivate safe, inclusive school environment. Finally, *Vasileiou Anastasia*, *Tsekouropoulos Georgios*, *Theocharis Dimitrios*, and *Grigoriadis Evangelos* explore gender inequality in tourism education through a systematic literature review (2019–2025). The study discloses inclusive pedagogy, curriculum internationalization, and industry–academia collaboration as strategies that contribute towards positioning gender equity as both an ethical and strategic imperative.

This issue thus attempts, to make ‘space’ for further understanding of how and what we know about gender DEI in education in order to provide “dignified and accessible educational services to all members of society without predatory design” (Arsel et al., 2022, p. 929). Alongside the

discussions emerging from the papers in this issue, we also acknowledge that advancing from formal equality to substantive gender justice requires an intersectional analytical framework (e.g., see Arsel et al., 2002), repeated (all-level) institutional commitment, and a systematic integration of gender-responsive pedagogical practices.

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