Call for Abstracts

The 11ᵗʰ Biannual Gulf Comparative Education Society Symposium

"Disrupting Discourses: Unpacking the Pandora's Box of Pedagogy, Policy, and Praxis"

November 12-14, 2025

The dawn of the 21ˢᵗ century has transformed the global educational landscape, ushering in numerous pedagogical practices, policies, and key players. International organizations and non-state actors have played a pivotal role in shaping the "education global governance architecture" through initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the Global Partnership for Education (est. 2002), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015-2030) (da Silva et al., 2023, p. 4). The SDGs, in particular, have paved the way for additional global educational interventions, especially in the wake of COVID-19, leading to a discourse characterized by "catastrophe" or "disaster didacticism" in education (Fontdevila et al., 2017; Schweisfurth, 2023; da Silva et al., 2023).

However, the identification of a learning crisis is not confined to low- and middle-income countries. In the high-income Gulf states, a deficit view of pedagogy is also pervasive, particularly in early childhood and higher education (UNICEF, n.d.; Sellami et al., 2023). Recent PISA assessment results, released in December 2023, highlight ongoing challenges in K-12 education in the Gulf post-pandemic. Poorer outcomes in learning assessments often lead to blame directed at "bad" teachers, placing pressure on educators to enhance their performance (Al Kaabi et al., 2024; Gerritsen, 2024). This issue is further compounded by a global teacher shortage (United Nations, 2024) that is also affecting the Gulf states (Al Amir, 2024; Gibbon, 2024; Romanowski and Qadhi, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the Gulf states and many schools therein are increasingly turning toward technology to improve educational outcomes, reduce teachers' workloads, and streamline processes. This trend is perhaps unsurprising, given the EdTech market's projected compound annual growth rate of 8.12% across the Gulf between 2024 and 2030 (Zawya, 2024). The perceived transformative potential of technology aligns with the Gulf states' aspirations for educational development and their broader economic goals (Mosly, 2022; PwC, 2021). However, the dominant narrative positioning EdTech as a panacea for educational challenges, including those faced by teachers, is coming under increasing scrutiny (Holmes, 2024; Schweisfurth, 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Kousa and Niemi, 2022).

As we approach a new quarter-century, the 11ᵗʰ anniversary of the Gulf Comparative Education Society (GCES) Symposium invites scholars, thinkers, and educators to reflect on dominant discourses related to educational challenges in the Gulf. While acknowledging existing hurdles, researchers are encouraged to critically examine how we can disrupt normative frameworks surrounding EdTech, teacher

qualifications, and assessment and accountability. Comparative studies reflecting on the global educational landscape are welcome for submission to the Society.

The 2025 GCES Symposium calls for papers exploring, but not limited to, the following areas:

- **Global education governance**, policy, and stakeholders
- **Educational hegemony**, marginalization, and power dynamics
- **EdTech, artificial intelligence**, and distance learning
- **Pedagogical frameworks**, teachers' qualifications, and professional development
- **Teacher retention/attraction policies**, **regulations,** and accountability
- **Nationalization policies, educational visions**, and Gulf policies
- **Learning outcomes, international assessments**, and quality assurance
- **Alternative educational models** (e.g., homeschooling, unschooling)

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is May 1, 2025. Authors should submit abstracts up to 250 words in length, along with 5 to 6 keywords. Submissions can be in English or Arabic. Scholars also have the option of submitting their abstracts for an entire panel, which can be up to 500 words in length. To submit your **abstract**, please click here. Researchers with **complete manuscripts** may also submit their draft to the Gulf Education and Social Policy Review Journal (here). If you have any questions, please send an email to the GCES Secretariat at gces.symposium@gmail.com.