

CESE 2026 – Roskilde University

Worlds of learning: comparative perspectives on the future(s) of education

Monday 29 June – Thursday 2 July 2026

Much contemporary attention in education centers on notions of learning and the learner. One powerful critique of this tendency is that the many broad and diverse aims of education are being reduced to a type of ‘learnification’ in which teachers are viewed as technical providers and students recipients of agreed learning outcomes. It is argued that neoliberal policy frames of learning lead to an isolated focus on the subject of learning at the risk of instrumentalizing and individualizing education aims and contexts. Some have argued that such narrowness does little to address the multiple challenges facing humanity and our planet.

Whilst important, learning and education are concerned with more than cognitive skills, teacher ‘inputs’ or assessment outcomes: they comprise multiple processes of engagement, dialogue and reflection where the goals are many and outcomes rarely reducible to the skills of doing, but rather, to socialization into cultural worlds and ways of being. Comparativists continue to be attuned to the many purposes of learning and education and will come together at the Conference to discuss, reinforce and expand our understanding of the meaning of both concepts. Under the title ‘Worlds of Learning’, we intend to reclaim and enrich anew the concept of learning, and its relation to education.

In recent years, the agendas of education have widened considerably by a growing recognition that the worlds of learning and education are themselves parts of larger, fragile eco-systems of human and other-than-human life. In spite of growing polarizing and oppositional forces, we see renewed calls for inclusion, equity, cooperation and solidarity in education. But, how inclusive can such education be when it still involves forms of intellectual flattening where a dominant mode of reasoning and purpose marginalizes alternative ontologies, experiences and ways of being and, thus, a fuller range of possibilities for expressing what it means to be human?

The Conference would seek to broaden our engagement with the concept of learning by exploring its manifestations in fields as diverse as educational studies, policy science, cultural and regional studies, post-human philosophies as well as from within marginalized or long forgotten knowledge traditions, all of which are areas of interest and activity for comparative education.

Contributions might explore different understandings of learning and education over time and in diverse historical and cultural contexts. Contributions might also examine the materiality of learning, for example how an awareness of touch, movement and bodily enactment shapes what is learnt and how. It might also include educational traditions that treat myth, superstition and the magical as important ways to express both belonging and otherness. Performative, artistic and literary genres of representation are also important in any expanded vision of learning. Contributions might also explore the entanglement of comparative

education with various colonialisms, ideologies, technologies and politics that continue to shape what is studied, by whom, how and why.

The conference will also provide opportunities to explore the dynamics of educational policy formation in European and global spaces. This might include the changing role and threats to the university in different national contexts, and the place of technology, not least artificial intelligence, in remaking educational processes and connectivities. Contributions might focus on matters of curricula and pedagogy, issues of assessment, or learning through creative engagements with gaming and the virtual.

Ultimately, the aim of the Conference will be to express and share the many forms of learning that give the comparative study of education its great potential and enduring promise.

The following key speakers are invited to help us unfold the conference theme through

Plenary Lectures:

- Jacob Feldt, Roskilde University, Denmark
- Arathi Sriprakash, University of Oxford, UK
- Sharon Todd, Maynooth University, Ireland
- Jeremy Rappleye, University of Hong Kong

Working Groups

The Conference will be organized around CESE's distinctive working group process where colleagues engage together over a number of sessions to explore a thematic focus. The Working Groups will include but not be restricted to the following:

WG1: Ideas and ideals of learning: historical and philosophical perspectives on notions of education, study and learning across time and place

WG2: Governing learning: managing, leading, and organizing learning systems and processes in education, including the influence of the digital

WG3: Learning and the university: politics, policies, practices and experiences of learning, experimentation and control in higher education

WG4: Learning and the curriculum: both explicit and hidden, now and in the future

WG5: Alternative epistemologies of learning: the worlds of embodied, indigenous and minoritized knowledges

WG6: Learning for political engagement: citizenship education, education for democracy, activism, capabilities and empowerment

In addition to these six Working Groups, there will be a Working Group dedicated to new scholars, as well as opportunities to submit papers for **Thematically-Focused Panels** in which

the many worlds of learning will still be in perspective but may touch upon themes that are not covered by any of the Working Groups. Finally, there will be opportunities to submit proposals for **Cross-Thematic Sessions** where papers can go beyond the conference theme by touching on epistemological issues related to comparative education, international education and development, early learning, special needs education, intercultural education, global policy studies and other related areas of study.

Conference format: Individual or co-authored, theoretical or empirical papers and panels will be presented at the Working Groups, the Thematically-Focused Panels and the Cross-Thematic Sessions. Additionally, multi-author panels of 3-4 papers can be suggested, with their placement negotiated with the Conference Organizers.

The deadline for submission is February 15, 2026.

About the Conference Venue

Roskilde University in Denmark emerged from the 'reform' movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s and continues to be defined by a pedagogical philosophy based upon participant-led, problem-oriented, group-based project work. The broader context of the Conference includes the Danish folk enlightenment tradition of 'learning for life' and education for democratic participation. <https://ruc.dk/en>

Roskilde University is located on the outskirts of Roskilde, a major regional city with origins in the pre-Christian, Viking age. It is noted for its UNESCO-listed Gothic cathedral and historic harbor, as well as the internationally-renown Roskilde Music Festival held each summer. Roskilde University lies approximately 30 kms west of Copenhagen and is easily reached by public transport. <https://www.visitfjordlandet.dk/en/areas/roskilde/>