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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Stefinee Pinnegar,
Brigham Young University, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE
Julia Mori
✉ julia.mori@unibe.ch

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Editorial: Equitable learning environments and teacher education

Julia Mori^{1*}, Gina Chianese² and Luciana Venâncio³

¹Department of Research in School and Instruction, Institute of Educational Science, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland, ²Department of Humanities, University of Trieste, Trieste, Italy, ³Institute of Physical Education and Sports, Federal University of Ceará, Fortaleza, Brazil

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Equitable learning environments and teacher education

To thrive and achieve their potential, children and young adolescents need a positive and supportive educational environment. Learning environments that embrace and respect various forms of diversity, including cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, gender identities, and a range of (dis)abilities, can significantly enhance learners' development and wellbeing (Lambert et al., 2023). Valuing diversity fosters a sense of belonging, allowing students to feel more connected to their classroom and school community and to build meaningful relationships. However, many young people often have to deal with unequal educational opportunities and learning environments that fail to meet their diverse needs (Baker et al., 2022). Unfair and unsupportive learning environments are likely to have consequences for students' learning and development as well as their wellbeing.

This Research Topic aimed to address the importance of creating equitable learning opportunities for all students, supporting them in becoming thriving, creative, resilient, and responsible members of society. The findings of the studies in this Research Topic underscore the need for diversity and cultural awareness in educational settings, offering valuable insights for further research in this field. Additionally, these findings are instrumental for teacher training programs, preparing educators to handle diversity effectively in educational environments where every student receives equal chances, irrespective of their background (Biesta, 2015; Gessner, 2017). Moreover, these findings contribute to the dialogue on developing more equitable learning spaces and pedagogical practices that support both equitable learning opportunities and children's and adolescents' wellbeing.

Overall, this Research Topic comprises seven contributions addressing a variety of challenges and issues such as school bullying, school anxiety, school absenteeism, immigrant students' education and school experiences, students' wellbeing in school, inequalities in schools, and social justice in education. The authors of these contributions—21 authors from 10 institutes across seven countries (Austria, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Norway, South Africa, United States)—applied a wide range of methodological approaches, such as self-report questionnaires, school records, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, systematic review, and critical incidents analysis, to investigate the challenges in educational environments and emphasize the importance of equitable

learning opportunities. While the study of [Bembich](#) explored the role of individual and contextual factors in the learning paths of students with a migrant background, [Noroz](#) described the building blocks of newcomer immigrant students' holistic education, including wellbeing pedagogy, positive and comprehensive collaboration with parents, and teachers' positive ideology of immigrant students and their families. The findings of these two studies suggested that addressing the educational needs of students with a migration background requires schools to build networks and effective collaboration with families and external entities. Two contributions investigated factors affecting student wellbeing and experiences in secondary schools, focusing on different aspects in the school environment. [Schlesier et al.](#) examined the relationship between school bullying, school anxiety, and school absenteeism, considering gender and grade level differences using structural equation modeling. The findings revealed significant differences in bullying and anxiety across gender and grades. It was found that high levels of being a victim of bullying were associated with increased school anxiety, and both school anxiety and high bullying offender values were linked to more absenteeism. [Ott et al.](#) explored how students' participation opportunities, such as democratic school culture, students' co-determination and active co-design in the classroom, impact student wellbeing by applying a multilevel analysis. The study found that a democratic school culture is significantly related to higher student wellbeing. Moreover, student co-determination and active participation in class can positively influence their wellbeing. Three studies focused on social justice in education and emphasizes the need for contextualization and adaptation of educational practices to address specific societal issues. The study of [Ngobeni et al.](#) extended its analysis beyond educational settings, observing how societal issues like unemployment and poverty influence South African educational system and discussed the ineffectiveness of curriculum reforms and practices in reducing socio-economic inequalities and educational injustices. In their study, [Fernández and Galarza](#) conducted interviews with pre-service mathematics teachers and proposed a framework for teaching mathematics to Emergent Bilinguals and effectively addressing their needs that can be used in guiding teacher education programs. Finally, [Flor et al.](#) explored themes of social justice in physical education classes such as gender

inequality, intellectual and physical disabilities, homophobia, and socioeconomic disparities and highlighted the important role of education based on social justice in addressing power imbalances and social rights issues in teaching and learning processes.

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Conflict of interest

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