Editorial Preface

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Theme: Educational Access, Well-Being, Resources, and Participation in African Contexts

Education does not take place in isolation from the institutional, social, cultural, and material conditions that shape learners' experiences. Questions of who is able to participate meaningfully, whether educational environments are safe and supportive, whether schools possess the resources required to function effectively, and how individuals and communities engage with educational and developmental processes remain central to the pursuit of equitable and quality education. **Volume 7, Issue 1 (2026)** of the *International Journal of Psychology and Education (IJOPE)* brings together five empirical studies that engage these concerns across basic, tertiary, and community settings in Ghana and Nigeria.

Although the studies address different populations and problems, they share an important underlying message: **educational outcomes and human development are shaped not only by individuals, but also by the quality of the systems, services, resources, relationships, and institutional practices surrounding them**. From communication access for deaf university students and the prevention of gangsterism among undergraduates to school financing, youth participation in community development, and pupils' interpretations of bullying, the articles collectively invite readers to look beyond surface-level explanations and examine the contextual conditions that enable or constrain meaningful participation.

The opening article, **"Deaf Students' Experiences of Sign Language Interpreting Services in Tertiary Education in Ghana"** by **Obed Appau**, foregrounds the voices of deaf students in examining one of the most important mechanisms for communication access in inclusive higher education. Drawing on interviews with 13 deaf students, the study shows that the mere availability of sign language interpreters does not automatically translate into meaningful educational access. Rather, students' experiences are shaped by interpreters' competence, knowledge of specialised academic content, and flexibility in the styles of interpretation they employ. The study therefore shifts attention from the *presence* of support services to their *quality and responsiveness*. It calls for stronger preparation of educational interpreters, continuous professional development, closer collaboration between lecturers and interpreters, and consideration of national accreditation or certification mechanisms for educational sign language interpreting in Ghana.

The second article, **"Influence, Causes, and Prevention of Gangsterism among Undergraduates in Kwara Central Nigeria: A Triangulation Study"** by **Shofiu Adewuyi Rasheed**, turns attention to student safety, behaviour, and institutional well-being in tertiary education. Using quantitative, qualitative, and documentary evidence, the study examines the consequences, drivers, and possible preventive responses to gangsterism among undergraduates. Its findings identify peer influence as a particularly important driver, alongside media exposure, family background, personality factors, and previous experiences of bullying. Gangsterism is shown to have consequences for academic participation, performance, student safety, and

institutional stability. Importantly, the paper argues against relying solely on punitive responses and instead advocates multidimensional interventions involving gang-resistance education, peer mentoring, anti-drug sensitisation, positive youth engagement, counselling, and other preventive programmes.

The third contribution, **"Evaluating the Adequacy of Financial Resources in Ghanaian Basic Schools: A Leadership Perspective"** by **Roger Amoako**, addresses the material foundations upon which quality education depends. Focusing on basic schools in the Gomoa West District, the study examines both statutory and supplementary sources of financing from the perspectives of school heads and district education officers. The findings indicate that the Capitation Grant, while constituting a major statutory funding mechanism, is perceived as inadequate, irregularly disbursed, and constrained by allocation requirements. Supplementary sources—including Parents Association contributions, religious offertories, and other locally generated resources—provide some relief but remain inconsistent and insufficient to address schools' wider operational and developmental needs. The article consequently places educational finance within a leadership and governance frame, emphasising that both the adequacy of resources and the capacity of school leaders to mobilise and manage them are critical to educational quality.

Extending the issue beyond formal educational institutions, the fourth article, **"Factors Affecting Youth Involvement in Community Development in the Ho West District of the Volta Region, Ghana"** by **Grace Ivy Afi Tsrakasu and Dinah Ampomah**, examines the interconnected conditions shaping young people's participation in local development. Guided by Social Systems Theory and employing a mixed-method approach, the study demonstrates that youth participation is influenced by a network of factors involving family, peers, education, motivation, religious institutions, economic circumstances, political dynamics, and community leadership structures. The findings are especially instructive in showing that youth engagement cannot be strengthened merely by inviting young people to participate; meaningful participation also requires supportive social relationships, inclusive decision-making structures, livelihood considerations, and opportunities through which youth voices can influence community development processes. The study ultimately positions young people as an essential resource for sustainable community development and calls for deliberate structures that allow their meaningful and independent involvement.

The final article, **"Understanding Pupils' Sense-Making of Bullying Through the Lens of the Hidden Curriculum: A Qualitative Study in Basic Schools in the Effutu Municipality, Ghana"** by **Alex Tetteh**, takes readers into the less visible social processes through which pupils learn what is acceptable, risky, or socially costly within school environments. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and drawing on Symbolic Interactionism, Sense-Making Theory, and the hidden curriculum as a conceptual lens, the study shows that pupils do not experience bullying merely as isolated acts. Rather, they interpret teacher responses, peer expectations, school practices, and the stigma surrounding reporting as implicit messages about how they should respond. Silence, retaliation, avoidance, and alliance-building therefore emerge as context-sensitive strategies for negotiating safety and belonging. The study makes an important contribution by demonstrating that anti-bullying policies cannot succeed through formal rules alone; schools must also address the implicit norms and everyday practices that may unintentionally normalise bullying or discourage pupils from seeking help.

Taken together, the five articles underscore the theme of **Educational Access, Well-Being, Resources, and Participation in African Contexts**. Access is explored not simply as entry into an institution but as the capacity to communicate and participate meaningfully. Well-being is considered through the social environments that can expose learners to bullying, gangsterism, exclusion, or insecurity. Educational quality is connected to the adequacy and governance of financial resources, while participation is examined as a product of interconnected family, institutional, community, and socio-economic systems.

A particularly important contribution of this issue is therefore its emphasis on **context**. Whether the concern is disability inclusion, student safety, educational financing, community participation, or bullying, the articles show that effective responses require attention to the structures and environments in which individuals act. Educational and developmental challenges cannot be adequately addressed by focusing exclusively on individual behaviour or individual deficits. Institutions, leaders, policymakers, professionals, families, peers, and communities all form part of the systems that either widen or reduce barriers to participation and well-being.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the authors for entrusting their scholarly work to the *International Journal of Psychology and Education*. We are equally grateful to the reviewers whose careful, constructive, and rigorous assessments helped strengthen the manuscripts and uphold the scholarly standards of the journal. We also acknowledge the dedication of the editorial and production teams whose work has contributed to bringing this issue to publication.

As *IJOPE* enters its seventh volume, we remain committed to providing a platform for research that is empirically grounded, contextually relevant, and responsive to contemporary challenges in psychology and education. We invite our readers—researchers, practitioners, policymakers, educational leaders, and students—to engage critically with the contributions in this issue and to extend the conversations they initiate through further scholarship, policy dialogue, and practice.

Warm regards,
Editor-in-Chief
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