



Special Issue Call for Papers: “Unpacking digital childhoods: intersectional complexities of digitalisation in early childhood education”

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The growing impact of digitalisation on children’s lives has become an increasingly important focus in current research and political discussions. Global trends toward expanding economic investments in fast-paced digital developments and technology-driven prospects indicate that digital technologies are here to stay. Nevertheless, these significant digital advancements produce unpredicted changes in social patterns, not least within educational contexts. Effective strategies for mitigating complexities stemming from human-computer interactions often remain lacking, as digital environments bring about far-reaching and interlaced new encounters.

The term digitalisation can be defined as “the adaptation of environments, practices, businesses and daily life to include and benefit from digital services and infrastructure”¹. Children are part of a growing digital transformation era, and new and emergent technologies directly and/or indirectly affect their lives². Constantly evolving and expanding, children’s digital media practices include the infusion of AI into their lives, datafication, age verification and online risks³. Increased digitalisation of children’s lives may involve blurred boundaries between online and offline encounters, changes to the ways in which children play and learn, and to the ways in which the datafication of childhoods shapes educational and other policy decisions⁴. All these impacts are mediated by intersectional dimensions in children’s lives, with digitalisation having the potential to exacerbate or address age-based, gendered, racialised, socio-economic, ableist and other inequalities. The upsurge in addressing the power dynamics and social imbalances embedded in digital transformations has already created its own terminologies, such as the *digital divide* and *digital inequalities*⁵.

In early childhood education, current discussions centre broadly around children’s digital literacies; digital play; the use of creative digital tools in learning spaces and the effectiveness of EdTech apps on

¹United Nations (2021) Convention on the Rights of The Child, General Comment No. 25: Children’s Rights in relation to the Digital Environment

²Green L, Haddon L, Livingstone S et al. (2024) *Digital Media Use in Early Childhood*. London: Bloomsbury; Green, L., Holloway, D., Stevenson, K., Leaver, T. & Haddon, L. (eds.) (2021) *The Routledge Companion to Digital Media and Children*. New York: Routledge.

³Digital Futures Commission (2023) Glossary of terms relating to children’s digital lives.

⁴Plowman, L (2019) When the Technology Disappears. In: *Exploring Key Issues in Early Childhood and Technology: Evolving Perspectives and Innovative Approaches* edited by C. Donohue. New York: Routledge, 32-26.

⁵OECD (2023) *Empowering Young Children in the Digital Age*, Starting Strong VII.

children's learning; children's digital interactions in the (inter)familial sphere and their connections with the learning environments; teacher's attitudes towards new and emergent technologies and teachers' digital literacies⁶. Acknowledging the new opportunities accompanied by children's engagement with the digital environments, digital interaction (or the lack of it) is not neutral but constructs multifaceted categories, hierarchies, and inequalities in its outlook on early childhood education contexts⁷.

There remains a notable gap in the intersectional analysis of embodied experiences and impacts of disadvantages, marginalisation and exclusion on children's lives resulting from digitalisation. This special issue of GER thus explores the complex intersectional effects of digitalisation on children and adults' lives within early childhood education spaces.

We call for conceptual and empirical articles that critically unpack the interrelations of children and digital media in early childhood education to inform future directions in research, policy and practice to enable socially just digital access and experiences for children. We welcome contributions that draw together digital childhoods, intersectionality, digital inequalities and early childhood education, including but not exhaustive of the following areas:

- Intersectional dimensions (age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, dis/ability etc.) of the experiences and impacts of digitalisation in early childhood education
- Digitalisation and early childhood pedagogies and practices
- Digitalisation and the planning, documentation and tracking of young children's learning and development
- Diverse young children's own understandings of and agency in relation to digitalisation in their educational lives
- Digitalisation of early childhood education in the majority and minority world
- Affective and moral discourses around child-digital interactions in early childhood education
- Play and digitalisation of young children's lives in early childhood education

Please send an abstract of no more than 250 words to busra.kumru@iuc.edu.tr by **March 14, 2025**. Please kindly attach your abstract as a Word document and write Global Education Review in the subject line of your email. Abstracts will be reviewed by the guest editors and you will be notified by April 25, 2025 if you are invited to submit a full article for the journal. Full manuscripts will be due by October 31, 2025 for the special issue. Following the peer review process, accepted articles are expected to be published in June 2026.

Authors of articles invited for review are required to participate in a blind review of up to two articles submitted for publication in the same issue.

⁶Undheim, M. (2022) Children and teachers engaging together with digital technology in early childhood education and care institutions: a literature review. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 30 (3), pp. 472-489; Edwards, S. (2016) New concepts of play and the problem of technology, digital media and popular-culture integration with play-based learning in early childhood education. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 25 (4), 513-532.

⁷OECD (2023), *Empowering Young Children in the Digital Age*, Starting Strong VII.