Call for Book Chapters

Interrogating and innovating comparative and international education: Decolonizing practices for inclusive, safe spaces

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Publisher: Sense

Conversations related to epistemology and methodology have been present within the context of international comparative education since the field’s inception. How comparative and international education phenomena are studied, the questions asked, the tools used and the epistemological, ontological, and ideological orientations they reflect, shape the nature of the knowledge produced, the value placed on that knowledge, and its pedagogy and implications for practice in diverse societies. Yet, from within and outside the Comparative and International Education (CIE) field, scholars and practitioners have raised concerns about the colonial and neo-colonial practices and dynamics that have (in part) reproduced and/or characterized the history of CIE (see for example, Crossley & Tikley, 2004; Hickling-Hudson, 2006; Tikly & Bond, 2013).

A little over 40 years ago, Carey stated that, “Historically, within ICE [International Comparative Education] there has been a sense that the goals of research are to furnish reliable information about educational systems, ideals, problems and activities” (1966, p. 418); however, Carey notes that over time this idea has changed, and with that evolution comes an effort to deconstruct systems and subsystems towards sharing and utilizing “theories and concepts...in cooperatively developing strategies for educational development (p. 419). In the intervening years, discussions addressing concerns of hegemonic power, insular understanding of cultures and peoples and increased awareness of the colonizers and the colonized have grown (Benhabib, 2002; Marginson & Mollis, 2001). Understanding the fluctuations of how one knows what they know provides some context to better understand the changing nature of ontology and epistemology among comparativists. Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal’s (2003) historical timeline explores the early forms of documenting knowledge in the 1880s as a time of knowing the other; the 1920s as an effort to understand the other; the 1960s as a time of constructing the other; and finally, the 2000s as a time characterized by a focus on measuring the other. Their contention lies within the notion that comparative education research has been used primarily to suggest comparison as a mode of governance (Baily, Shah, & Call-Cummings, 2016).

The emergence of measurement as the foundation of comparison in the 2000s would certainly suggest that the need for metrics supports the overall continued push for evidence-based findings and emphasis on positivist models of research. This affects comparative education in a unique fashion where, due to the scope of work, the impacts can affect policy, projects, and programs on a wider dimension as mandated by global frameworks such as Education for All, the Sustainable Development Goals (and their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals) and others. In contrast, Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) argue that knowing the historical journey of a geographic space might be a more appropriate use of comparative research. This focus on qualitative understanding of context and meaning draws attention to the debate over the last fifty years on the role, function and use of research and the larger philosophical questions that are both explicit and implicit, as well as overt and covert. Questions relate to, how one knows what they know; and, how do one’s experiences color what and how they know? Other questions emerging from this discussion include: addressing who has power over knowledge production and its dissemination (Quinn, 1998), to whom access is granted, and interrogating the role of researcher identity and concept of participant. Ultimately, critical issues of representation, recognition, knowledge production and values in the design and application of CIE
research encourage (and indeed, we argue, demand) us to ask tough questions of ourselves and about our work; questions that require careful reflection and thought, to navigate through and towards a better future for CIE research and educational change more generally.

Our focus in this volume is on epistemological issues of what can be known and how, challenging dominant and hegemonic discourses and presenting alternative perspectives/knowledge. Critical questions concerning the dominant application of “Western” epistemologies and research paradigms in the field of CIE draw attention to problems of exclusion and the reproduction of rigidly unjust hierarchies (of diverse peoples, knowledges and practices). Simply put, failing to recognize and meaningfully learn from and apply critical and alternative methodologies (i.e., Indigenous, anti- and post-colonial, participatory, feminist, etc.), means that CIE may not necessarily be a safe and/or inclusive research space for all. In this volume, we want to engage such vital issues and questions to extend and deepen the conversation and promote progressive change in the field of comparative and international education research and practice.

Contributions to this volume might address the following topics:

- How might questions concerning the dominant application of positivist epistemologies and research paradigms in the field of CIE draw our attention to problems of exclusion and the reproduction of rigidly unjust hierarchies?
- How might current and past methodological practices in CIE be critiqued and challenged from indigenous and non-dominant culture perspectives? And what implications for future practice may this analysis unearth?
- How might counter-stories and counter-narratives critique and challenge spatial inclusivity in CIE? And how might stories/narratives contribute to the opening up of safer, more inclusive spaces in CIE?
- What sorts of regional/national/local efforts have characterized both change and continuity in terms of the research paradigms and methodologies embraced in CIE?
- How might we conceptualize and account for intersectionality in research, policy and practice?
- What are the linkages between research and international education agendas? And what are some of the implications and/or challenges and opportunities suggested by these linkages?
- What are the research and policy trends in the area of educational equity in CIE?
- How can we better acknowledge and address value pluralism in the context of research, policy and advocacy?
- How do existing power and authority dynamics shape CIE research and practice? How can the field of CIE confront internal and external power and authority dynamics?
- How can the field destabilize and transform knowledge hierarchies through research and practice?
- What are some examples of education research practices that promote and enact a socially just and transformative ethos anchored by an ethics of engagement between researcher(s) and the researched?
- What challenges and opportunities are associated with the policy uptake and broader use of findings from non-dominant, innovative and social justice-oriented education research approaches?

Proposals should be for original works not previously published (including in conference proceedings) and that are not currently under consideration for another journal or edited collection. Formats for proposals include full-length papers (5000-8000 words). 350-500 word abstracts should be emailed to CIES2017Symposium@gmail.com by January 20, 2018. If your proposal is accepted for the book, you will be notified by February 1, 2018 and a full-length submission between 5000-7000 words (excluding references) will be required by April 30, 2018. The editors are happy to discuss ideas prior to the deadline.
References


