

Editorial introduction: Comparative & International Education in Turbulent Times

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25 years have gone by since CICE's first edition, in 1998. A quarter of a century later the world has changed more than many would have dared to imagine in the late 1990s. Just a year before, Meyer et al., (1997) published their seminal piece on "World Society and the Nation State", claiming that Western values of human rights, scientific rationality, and democratic government had prevailed and would produce an inevitable process of global homogeneity. For a long time scholars in Comparative and International Education have debated about these claims, the process of globalization, and the interactions between national and supra-national forces in education. Yet 25 years later, the world faces new and unimagined challenges that have drastically changed our present and the future landscape.

From one corner, a voracious financial capitalist system continues to advance at the expense of human well-being and our very subsistence on earth. As brilliantly described by Mark Fisher (2009), the capitalist system has created the illusion that non-alternative is possible. Within it, the neoliberal project has prevailed over other ideas or doctrines, infiltrating almost every sphere of human activity. As a result, we have replaced the idea of solidarity at the expense of competition as the natural regulatory force of human interactions. Women continue to struggle to obtain equal treatment to men, in the context of worsening conditions for workers around the world at the expense of large corporations' profit greed. This logic is also transforming education, which has become subsumed to economic productivity, where teachers' workload has skyrocketed, and their as well as teachers' mental health also suffer from the external demands of the 'knowledge economy'.

At the same time, school systems continue to struggle in the post-pandemic era and millions of students risk becoming a 'lost generation' due to a lack of an appropriate realization of their right to education, Artificial Intelligence is disrupting the classroom but also the labor market. In this mist, the hope of democracy spreading to every country contrasts with a world in which half of them are governed by authoritarian regimes of various degrees (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2023). Not only that, some of the fastest growing economies are examples of the opposite set of values of those projected by 'World Society': multiple violations of human rights, attacks on minorities –LGBTQ+ community, migrants, ethnic groups– (Velasco, 2022). Among them, women are a key target of far-right movements, attacking earned rights such as abortion and actively opposing fights for equal rights. Moreover, forced migration has reached unprecedented numbers due to armed conflicts, authoritarianism, and climate disasters, affecting more than 100 million people around the world. These, among other concerns, have inspired the questions behind this special issue, where we invited authors to think,

discuss, and engage with these topics by reflecting on what's the role of Comparative and International Education in these turbulent times.

The first section of the special issue presents four articles that tap into these questions and bring new insights and perspectives to look at them. First, **Kelsey A. Dalrymple** addresses the increasingly important issue of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) in refugee contexts. SEL has been highlighted as one of the key focuses by the OECD after the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it is ever more relevant in refugee contexts due to the unimaginable challenges faced by students and their families. Hence, while SEL is increasingly becoming a key area of intervention in refugee contexts, Dalrymple examines how actors operating in refugee settlements in East Africa understand and make sense of these approaches. In particular, the study looks at the tensions between Westernized views of SEL portrayed by donors or international organizations vis-a-vis local understandings and needs of students, and what implications this has for SEL interventions.

From different angles, **Ruchi Saini** and **Patricia Grillet** address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and how it disproportionately affected them in multiple ways. Undoubtedly, India was one of the hardest affected countries during the COVID crisis, which is the setting for **Saini's** study. The author interrogates how women navigated the increased labor demand produced by the pandemic delving deep into the stories of six Indian school teachers. Hence, adopting a qualitative methodology, the piece uses an interesting approach providing an emplotted narrative story of teachers' experiences during the pandemic. Tapping on feminist theories, Saini analyzes female teachers' responses in terms of tactical strategies to resist an increasingly adverse working and domestic environment, and, as 'institutional betrayal' on behalf of schools by exploiting teachers' precarious working conditions while maximizing their profit.

From a different angle, **Patricia Grillet** paid attention to how the international community looked at –or overlooked– women and gender disparities during the pandemic. In particular, Grillet focused on the early stages of the COVID analyzing publications between March 2020 and September 2021, as it signaled the initial focus of international actors, in contrast to later stages where more and more topics were covered. Her findings point to shared challenges of women across regions during the pandemic while pointing to the lack of attention to structural gender disparities from the international community in the most critical phase of the pandemic.

Shizza Fatima's article explores the complex colonial heritages of language policies in Pakistan and how the use of English, as the settler colonial language, or Urdu, one of the many native languages, creates a strong sense of division and segregation in students. The case of Pakistan can act as an example of the dozens of countries in which language policies create a divide not only within schools but also beyond it. This historical dilemma is also augmented In the context of growing forced migration, where the language of instruction has become a highly politicized matter as it can operate as a backdrop for equal opportunities among learners. However, as the article shows, students are not passive recipients of such heritage, but actively engage in a process of resistance and decolonial praxis.

The second section of the special issue is composed of two essays and a book review that touches on different burning topics for CIE scholarship. First, **Alexandra Schindel**, **Monica Miles**, and **Kate Haq** bring to the fore that, when teaching about climate change, it is paramount to include a critical racial perspective in it. Using the 2022 Buffalo Blizzard as an example, the authors argue that race is inextricably linked to climate change and that its racial injustices are at the core of those populations enduring the worse consequences of it. Later, **Carol Anne Spreen** discusses the present consequences of predatory capitalism and introduces the idea of a contra-hegemonic *third space* of learning. In her essay, Spreen presents some of the key issues raised by her latest book, together with Gary L. Anderson, Dipti Desai, and Ana Inés Heras, where they show how activism, resistance, and collective practices can produce new ways of learning beyond capitalist rationale. Finally, **Whitney Hough** reviews Dr. Khalid Arar's book *School Leadership for Refugees' Education: Social Justice Leadership for Immigrant, Migrants and Refugees*. In her review, Hough highlights the importance of leadership roles in the context of the incredibly challenging conditions of refugee resettlements by breaking down the strengths and areas for further research in Arar's book.

I would like to take the opportunity in this introduction to celebrate CICE's 25th anniversary by honoring not only the 2022-2023 cohort but also all of the former editors-in-chief, editors, copyeditors and media engagement managers who had worked over the years to make this journal possible. It was and continues to be the work and passion of the student body at Teachers College who envision in CICE the opportunity to engage, discuss, and learn in our field of Comparative and International Education. As a student-led journal, CICE became a reference in the field of Comparative and International Education, publishing pieces from novel scholars, as well as more senior ones. As such, CICE has and continues to fulfill its mission to act as a platform to give voice to scholars from the most diverse backgrounds, locations, and perspectives by following the most rigorous scientific standards in our editorial work.

Over these 25 years, CICE has dedicated issues to a wide range of topics, always *avant-garde* on current issues. From exploring the role of NGOs in 1998, the recurring issue of the impact of technology in education in 2003 and 2018, the role of social movements in 2015, exploring methodological issues in our field to the more recent issue of COVID-19 in 2022. This arbitrary selection of some of the many challenging topics covered by CICE since its inception shows nothing but the intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and interests of each of CICE's editorial teams.

In particular, this special issue was born of a collective decision from CICE's editorial board. In my role as editor-in-chief, I considered myself nothing but a *primus-inter-pares*. Therefore, in line with CICE's spirit of being a collective project led by the students of Teachers College, we worked together on deciding our anniversary theme as well as the journal priorities for the year. Without the editorial board's tireless work, commitment, and dedication, this journal would not be possible. We have built not only a work team but a community of colleagues who count on each other and collaborate to grow and learn together.

In this sense, we continue to work to improve our journal, as we are in the process of becoming certified by the Directory of Open Access Journals, a new milestone that will continue to attract talented scholars around the world, while also increasing the outreach of our journal. As part of this process, we have digitalized and gathered under the CICE website hosted by Columbia University Libraries all the prior volumes in these last 25-year years. These efforts build on top of prior important steps taken over these years, such as the automatic submission system or the development of a clear communication strategy with the scientific community.

To conclude, I'd like to particularly thank Professor Regina Cortina, the International Advisory Board the external reviewers, the authors, and everyone who contributed to our journal's growth, consolidation, and expansion over the years. I can do nothing but encourage students to get involved and enjoy this unique and enriching experience, as well as more authors to submit their work to CICE to keep the journal moving forward during the next 25 years.

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