

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Comparative and International Education Society

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The Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), formerly Comparative Education Society, was founded in 1956, bringing together academics and professionals with an interest in comparative education in the United States, and elsewhere, into a formal body of scholarship. With its founding, CIES, the oldest established society of its kind, signaled recognition of comparative and international education (CIE) as a distinct academic field, although debate over the meanings of, and relationship between, the *comparative* and the *international* has persisted for decades. Since its inception, the CIES, though essentially a national society, enjoyed membership from scholars of other countries and has played a significant role in the growth and development of the field and its ongoing debates within the academy.

With a growing impact on the formation and implementation of educational policies and technical assistance programs around the world, scholarship in the field came under attack in the 1960s as being largely an adjunct of western imperialism, super-imposing U.S. educational models and ideals, while neglecting the cultural and political realities of the developing and post-colonial world. Even as the field profited from the political climate of the Cold War era, internal debates over the ideal relationship between comparative education scholars and various policy institutions and development agencies persisted. With its tremendous growth and diversification, the field witnessed major paradigm shifts and changing conceptualizations of difference, and therefore the meaning of “comparative” in comparative education research. However, scholarship continued to be largely Euro- and U.S.-centric. Furthermore, CIES membership was critiqued for not being fully representative of the diversity of scholars in the field, a concern whose echoes were most recently heard again at the 50th Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society in March 2006.

When we began planning for this issue of CICE to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Comparative and International Education Society, our initial concern was how an issue reflecting on the Society’s past could be brought to bear on current issues in comparative education, in fitting with the journal’s mission. The Call for Papers solicited contributions that critically reflect on past and enduring critiques of CIE, historically grounded, yet reflective of the field’s current debates and challenges, and future directions, along a historically situated trajectory. Submissions were invited to examine such topics as the field’s shifting theoretical paradigms and research approaches and methods; its alleged role as a missionary of the “center” to the disadvantaged “periphery;” its contribution to cultural imperialism; its (in)capacity to work for international peace and justice; and its dedication to the empowerment of local communities.

The resulting collection of papers, indeed, reflects on the field's past, present, and future. By providing insights into the history and changing role of CIES, identifying gaps in its scholarship, and addressing the ongoing debate over comparative methods, the papers demonstrate the Society's rich history and scholarship and expand on critiques of the field. The papers also attend to the various critiques by redressing misconceptions, proposing areas for future research, and suggesting concrete ways forward for teaching future generations of CIE researchers. Taken together, the authors thus provide a vision for a field dedicated to justice through scholarship based on nuanced understandings.

In **A Brief History of the Comparative and International Education Society**, Elizabeth Sherman Swing presents a chronological institutional history of CIES, based on her work as the appointed CIES Historian. The author describes the founding of the Society and highlights major developments, such as the controversy surrounding the changing of its name to include *International*, the weakening identification with teacher associations, and the establishment of the CIES Collection at the Kent State University Archives. In addition, she provides a brief overview of issues arising since the 1990s, including how the Society has grappled with national and international political concerns and its recent trend toward decentralization through committees and Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

In providing an account of the interrelated histories of CIES and the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), Maria Manzon and Mark Bray situate CIES into its larger context, as one of 35 constituent societies of the WCCES. Their paper, **The Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES): Leadership, Ambiguities and Synergies**, highlights the various roles CIES has played in the founding, development, and leadership of the WCCES, its influence on member societies, and promotion of comparative education worldwide. The authors illustrate the ambiguities and tensions arising from the fact that, unlike other national societies, CIES has never had the U.S. label attached to it, thereby claiming an international constituency and scope for which WCCES was intended to be the umbrella body.

In **The International Race over the Patronage of the South: Comparative and International Education in Eastern Europe and the United States**, Gita Steiner-Khamsi and William deJong-Lambert identify a significant gap in North American scholarship on the history of comparative and international education, which has failed to take into account the considerable impact of the Cold War on area and development studies in the field. In critiquing this oversight, the authors provide an account of the positive effects of Cold War rivalries on CIE in Eastern Europe and the U.S., thus presenting an argument for re-examining developments in educational research during the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s from a post-Cold War perspective.

Frances Vavrus and Lesley Bartlett look at issues of epistemology to address the ongoing debate over comparative methods in **Comparatively Knowing: Making a Case for the Vertical Case Study**. The authors assert the importance of giving attention to various levels of analysis in order to achieve validity in knowledge production. They propose the vertical case study as a means of gaining contextualized knowledge by comparing claims of actors from different social locations and providing a balance of perspectives grounded in a thorough understanding of the micro-level context. The authors then

explore the implications of such comparative ways of knowing for the training of graduate students preparing to conduct research in CIE. The authors thus provide a different approach to conceptualizing the “comparative” in CIE, an issue persistent in critiques of a body of scholarship that has been dominated by single-country studies.

Vandra L. Masemann concludes the issue with an incisive critique of the papers in her **Afterword**. She begins by critically examining the assumptions underlying the Call for Papers, then addresses each of the articles, providing areas for reflection and extension.

In dealing with changing conceptualizations of its role, modes of operation, core scholarship, membership, and approaches to teaching the field, the collection of papers touches on running themes in the history of CIES and addresses central concerns from the past, through the present, and to the future of comparative and international education. In reviewing the papers for publication, the Editorial Board was struck, however, first, by the observation that they continue to reflect the privileged position of Euro-American academia, and second, by the fact that none were authored by colleagues from the global South, an observation also noted by Masemann in her commentary.

These observations are in concordance with internal critiques of CIES and may indeed signal where the field is currently situated. In *Comparatively Speaking: An Oral History of the First 50 Years of the Comparative and International Education Society* (Steiner-Khamsi & Johnson, 2006), CIES former presidents note that, while CIES membership has visibly changed from the former white boys’ club it once was to a diverse body of scholars, its cannon continues to be largely focused on European and North American scholarship. In striving to publish authors from diverse positions and geographic contexts, CICE seeks to broaden, if not shift, this focus, thus contributing to the reconceptualization of the field as one with multiple perimeters and centers, as it continues to grow and reshape its contours. As Masemann (in Steiner-Khamsi & Johnson, 2006) suggests, the strength of our field is in its diversity.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher for her helpful feedback on an earlier version of this introduction.

References

Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Johnson, E. (Producers). (2006). *Comparatively speaking: An oral history of the first 50 years of the Comparative and International Education Society* [Documentary]. (Available from CIES and Teachers College, Columbia University).