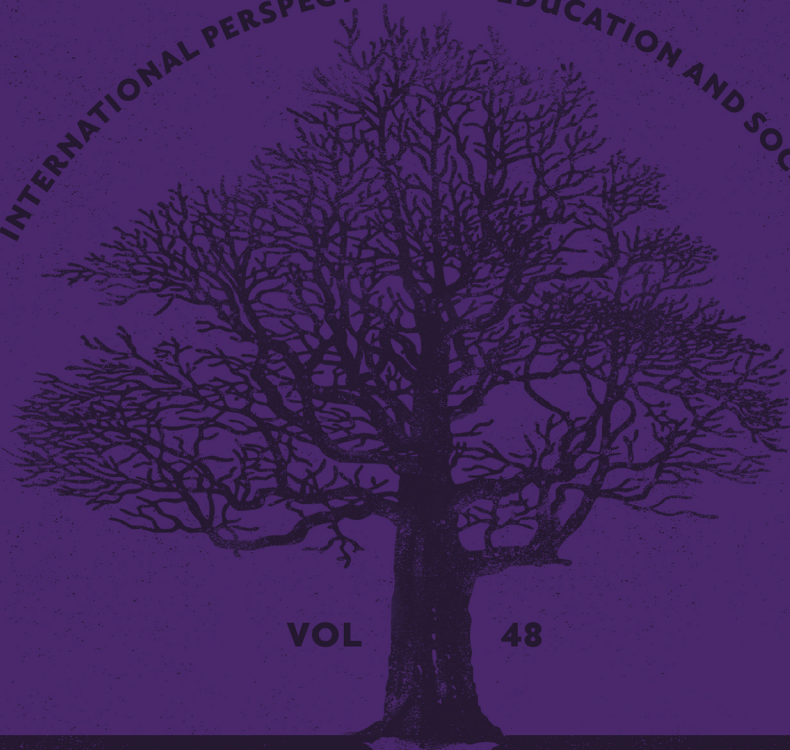


INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AND SOCIETY



VOL

48

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**ANNUAL REVIEW OF  
COMPARATIVE AND  
INTERNATIONAL  
EDUCATION 2023**

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Edited by

**ALEXANDER W. WISEMAN**

ANNUAL REVIEW OF  
COMPARATIVE AND  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION 2023

# INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

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**ALEXANDER W. WISEMAN**  
*Texas Tech University, USA*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Alexander W. Wiseman**, PhD, is Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy in the College of Education and Director of the Center for Innovative Research in Change, Leadership, and Education (CIRCLE) at Texas Tech University, USA. He holds a dual-degree PhD in Comparative and International Education and Educational Theory and Policy from Pennsylvania State University, an MA in International Comparative Education from Stanford University, an MA in Education from The University of Tulsa, and a BA in Letters from the University of Oklahoma. He conducts comparative educational research on educational policy and practice using large-scale education datasets on math and science education, information and communication technology (ICT), teacher preparation, professional development and curriculum, as well as school principal's instructional leadership activity. He is the author of many research-to-practice articles and books, and serves as Senior Editor of the online journal, *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, and as Series Editor for the *International Perspectives on Education and Society* volume series (Emerald Publishing).

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Shamiga Arumuhathas**, a doctoral student at Western University of Ontario Faculty of Education, is an instructor in the international teacher education cohort and a secondary teacher in the Greater Toronto Area. Informed by her international teaching experiences in East Asia, her scholarly work focuses on understanding the experiences of racialized international students in settler-colonial universities. She investigates systemic barriers hindering their academic persistence and advocates for the decolonization of higher education, teacher education, and equitable inclusion of marginalized groups. As a research practitioner and educator, she provides intercultural interventions for students during crises, emphasizing sustainable secondary and post-secondary education practices.

**Supriya Baily**, PhD, is an activist, scholar, and educator. Currently, she is Professor of Education at George Mason University, focusing social justice issues in education, the marginalization of girls and women in educational policy and practice, and the role of teacher education to address educational inequity. She serves also as the Co-Director for the Centre for International Education and served as the President of the Comparative and International Education Society (2022–2023). She has co-edited four books, including *Experiments in Agency: A Global Partnership to Transform Teacher Research* (2017), *Educating Adolescent Girls Around the Globe: Challenges and Opportunities* (2015), and *Internationalizing Teacher Education in the US* (2012), published numerous articles and book chapters, and has secured nearly \$2m in collaborative grant partnerships. Her new book, *Bangalore Girls: Witnessing the Rise of Nationalism in a Progressive City*, will be released in November 2024.

**Miriam Broeks** is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. She is a member of the Research for Equitable Access and Learning Centre. Her interests include policy analysis and evaluation, comparative education research, and critical quantitative approaches to tackle educational inequalities. She has experience in international survey design, mixed-methods research, impact evaluations, and pilot studies. Her doctoral research focuses on disentangling the factors driving educational inequalities affecting Indigenous pupils in Peru using longitudinal survey data. As Senior Analyst at RAND Europe, she managed a variety of education research projects for the Education Endowment Foundation, the OECD, the European Commission, and other public and private organizations. She holds an MSc in Comparative Social Policy from the University of Oxford and a BA in Human Geography and Sociology, from the University College Roosevelt in the Netherlands.

**Minju Choi** is a doctoral candidate in the International and Comparative Education program at Stanford University. Her dissertation is a cross-national, comparative study of the right to education for non-citizens as framed in national constitutions. More broadly, her research interests include the comparison of human rights and human capital ideologies in education, as well as tensions between nation-building purposes of schooling and the universal right to education for all. She has been examining these issues in the context of educational curricula, organizations, laws, and policies. Her recent publications may be found in *Comparative Education Review*, *Globalisation, Societies, and Education*, *Sociology of Education*, and the *Oxford Handbook on Education and Globalization*. Currently, she is a PhD Fellow at the Stanford Philanthropy and Civil Society Center and an active member of the Center's Global Civil Society and Sustainable Development Lab. Prior to her PhD studies, she worked in several international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO Bangkok.

**Praveen Dubey**, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Education and Director of Clinical Experiences and Partnerships at Montana State University Northern. His research interest focuses in the areas of multicultural education, diversity, equity, and inclusivity, leadership and change, technology in education (digital equity), STEM education, immigrant education, comparative and international education, teacher quality, and teacher choice for diverse classrooms. He uses the statistical tools of structural equation modeling (SEM), mediation and moderation, and R programming in his research to address the issues that intersect in improving the learning experiences of diverse, immigrant/refugee, and minority students. He has presented research papers at several national research conferences such as the American Educational Research Association and the University Council for Educational Administration and is currently working on different projects and grants.

**Ellie Ernst** is an undergraduate student at Loyola University Chicago double majoring in Economics and Political Science. She has focused her research on reparative economic justice and exploring the best method of delivery for reparations. She is recognized in the Interdisciplinary Honors College and Dean's List.

**Oscar Espinoza** is full-time Professor at the Universidad de Tarapacá. He is also a researcher at the Interdisciplinary Program of Educational Research. In the past, he has worked in research projects funded by international agencies (e.g., USAID, UNESCO, World Bank, UNDP, and Ford Foundation) and national agencies (Ministry of Education, National Commission of Science and Technological Research, and the National Council for the Innovation and Competitiveness) in issues associated with access, equity, quality assurance, academic performance, accreditation, management, and higher education policies. Currently, he participates in various networks including the Comparative International Education Society, Latin American Studies Association, and Network of Epistemological and Theoretical Studies in Educational Policy. Author of numerous publications,

including: 10 books, 60 book chapters, and 95 articles. He holds an EdD in Policy, Planning, and Evaluation in Education from the University of Pittsburgh, USA.

**Chevy R. J. Eugene** is Lecturer in the Black and African Diaspora Studies Program in the Department of Political Science at Dalhousie University. He is recognized as one of the Global Top 100 Most Influential People of African Descent Under 40 in politics and governance. Currently, he is completing a Social Science Humanities Research Council funded PhD entitled “Decolonizing the Caribbean Community’s Reparations Campaign” in the Social and Political Thought Program at York University, Canada. His research takes up the historical struggles for reparations by conceptualizing it as a liberation praxis for conquest, enslavement, colonialism, and neocolonialism in new worldmaking, in the Caribbean context. It proposes a decolonial reparations framework that seeks to delink demands for reparations from neoliberal epistemologies and mechanisms that perpetuate the continuation of neocolonial governmentalities in the Caribbean. His research explores the role of the arts and social movements in the politicization and mobilization of civil society in the Caribbean and its diasporas on the issue of reparatory justice.

**Brandon Folson** is an enrolled member of the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Counsel Fire), belonging to the Ihanktonwan Nakota, federally recognized as the Yankton Sioux Tribe and the Tetonwan: Oglala Lakota, federally recognized as the Oglala Sioux Tribe, of South Dakota. His mother was compelled to attend the St. Paul’s Mission Indian Boarding School in Marty, South Dakota, in the 1960s and 1970s. At Loyola University Chicago, he is pursuing a degree in Economics, Philosophy, and Arab Language. Engaging in independent research through the Cura Scholar Research program, he explores indigenous economics with the intention of optimizing economic systems within his Lakota/Nakota heritage. He holds the position of President on the Dakota County Technical College Alumni Board in Rosemount, MN. He aspires to earn a dual JD/PhD, utilizing his education, experience, and relationships to enhance the quality of life for American Indians both on and off the reservation.

**Pablo Fraser** holds a PhD in Comparative and International Education Policy from the Pennsylvania State University and is a Sociologist from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He is currently the Coordinator for Teacher Research at the UNESCO Santiago office. Previously, he was a Policy Analyst in the Teaching and Learning International Survey at the OECD from 2015 to 2022. His research involves teacher training programs, teacher effectiveness, and teacher working conditions from an international comparative perspective.

**Fabián Fuentealba** holds graduate and master’s degrees in Statistics from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, with experience in psychometrics, educational measurement, and evaluation. He works as an Educational Assessment Specialist at the Latin American Laboratory for Evaluation of the Quality of Education at UNESCO Santiago, leading the design, analysis, and

implementation of the Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study and being a technical counterpart to consultants and collaborating institutions.

**Francisco Gatica** holds a master's degree in Management and Public Policy, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Education Research at the University of Chile. Additionally, he earned his undergraduate degree in Social Work from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He brings a decade of expertise to the field of education, particularly in the design and implementation of large-scale educational assessments. Currently, he serves as an Educational Researcher at the Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education, affiliated with UNESCO Santiago.

**James Gazawie** serves as Assistant Development Officer at the University of Pennsylvania, contributing to the organization, coordination, and execution of fundraising efforts for specific domains within the Perelman School of Medicine. He is currently pursuing a Master of Science in Education at the University of Pennsylvania. He has a diverse professional history encompassing academia, non-profit work, and even experience in cosmetology and construction. With a passion for education, he is dedicated to making a positive impact in the field of international educational development.

**Carlos Henríquez Calderón** holds a master's degree in Management and Public Policies from the University of Chile. He is an Engineer from the University of Santiago de Chile. He was General Manager of the Measurement Center, Mide UC, of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Executive Secretary of the Quality Agency of Education of the Ministry of Education of Chile, during the period 2014–2019. He currently works as Coordinator of the Latin American Laboratory for Evaluation of the Quality of Education, of the Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO.

**Tinesh Indrarajah** is a PhD in Higher Education student at Loyola University Chicago researching on university wellbeing practices, minoritized student experiences, racial capitalism in education, reparative justice movements, and ASEAN regionalism policies. He is also the Managing Editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, the flagship journal of Comparative and International Education. He graduated from Yale-NUS College with a BA with Honors in History and a Master in Public Policy from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

**Liz Jackson** is Professor and Assistant Dean of Research in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. She is the President of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong and a former Director of the Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Education. She is also currently Editor-in-Chief of Educational Philosophy and Theory and a Fellow and Past President of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia. She has published broadly in philosophy of education, global studies in education, and citizenship education and has

conducted research in various societies in North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Her single-authored books include *Emotions: Philosophy of Education in Practice* (Bloomsbury, 2024), *Contesting Education and Identity in Hong Kong* (Routledge, 2021), *Beyond Virtue: The Politics of Educating Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), and *Questioning Allegiance: Resituating Civic Education* (Routledge, 2019).

**tavis d. jules** is Professor of Higher Education at Loyola University Chicago; his focus and expertise lie in comparative and international education, specifically on decoloniality, racial capitalism, race/racism, terrorism, regionalism, and dictatorial transition issues. He is Past President of the Caribbean Studies Association, the immediate Past Book and Media Reviews Editor for the *Comparative Education Review*, an International Institute of Islamic Thought Fellow, a Senior Fellow at NORRAG and current Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Comparative Education Review* (with Florin D. Salajan). His vast professional and academic experiences have led to research and publications across the Caribbean and North Africa. He has authored, co-authored, and edited over sixty refereed articles and book chapters, three monographs, and seven edited books. At Loyola, he is a Magis Fellow, Diversity Advocate, and Diversity and Equity Liaison.

**Mary Khan** is Presidential Management Fellow at the US Department of Education, where she oversees the nation's grants aimed at addressing learning losses due to Covid-19. She holds a Master of Science in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. She previously worked as a teacher in alternative high school programs in both Bangladesh and the USA. Her dedication lies in supporting underserved students.

**Jakob Kost**, PhD, is Lecturer in Education at Bern University of Teacher Education Switzerland. His research interests focus on international comparative (vocational) education research, upper secondary and higher education policy, educational and labor market pathways, and the relation between education and labor market policy. He published two books in German and several articles in German and English on topics such as the permeability of the Swiss education system, success of vocational education and training students with migration background, upward mobility in education systems, teacher education, and teacher shortage. He is an Expert on vocational education and training pathways and social disparities and was Advisor to the Swiss Science Council and the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training. He studied at the University of Teacher Education Zürich, Humboldt University Berlin, and did his master's and PhD at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He was a Visiting Scholar with the Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto between 2021 and 2023.

**Joanna Leek**, PhD in Education, is a Researcher, Lecturer, and Teacher Trainer at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Lodz, Poland. She has

extensive experience in teaching and training pedagogy students in the areas of educational law and international education. Her research interests include international education, global citizenship education, multicultural education, mobility of students and teachers, digital mobility in Europe, curriculum development, early school leaving, and teacher education. She is passionate about promoting intercultural dialogue, diversity, and inclusion in education. In 2020–2023, she led a project on a comparative study of the functions of international programs in Poland, funded by the National Science Centre Poland.

**Madeleine Lutterman** is an undergraduate student at Loyola University Chicago double majoring in French and Global Studies with minors in Political Science and Photography. Her academic career has been centered around French cultural and language studies, international relations policy, and international law. Her research is focused on international reparative justice movements along with former French colonial relations and current decolonization efforts. She is recognized as an Interdisciplinary Honors student and on the Dean's List. She is also a member of Sigma Iota Rho Global Studies Honors Society and Pi Delta Phi French Honors Society.

**Noel McGinn** received his PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Michigan. He is Professor Emeritus of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and Fellow Emeritus of the Harvard Institute for International Development. His authored books include *Build a Mill, Build a City, Build a School: Education and the Modernization of Korea*; *Framing Questions, Constructing Answers: Linking Research with Education Policy for Developing Countries*; *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?*; and *Learning to Educate: Proposals for the Reconstruction of Education in Developing Countries*. He is the Co-editor of the *Handbook of Modern Education and Its Alternatives and Comparative Perspectives on the Role of Education in Democratization*. He is the Editor of *Crossing Lines: Research and Policy Networks for Developing Country Education and Learning Through Collaborative Research*. He is Past President of the Comparative and International Education Society. In 1998, he received the Andres Bello Award of the Organization of American States for Outstanding Contribution to Education in Latin America.

**Leping Mou**, PhD, is Lecturer (Assistant Professor) in Postsecondary Education (Higher Education and the College Sector) and Comparative International Education at the School of Education, University of Glasgow, UK. Prior to joining Glasgow in 2023, he held academic positions at various institutions including the Ontario Institute for Studies of Education (OISE) University of Toronto, York University, and University of Toronto Mississauga. He obtained his PhD in Higher Education and Comparative International Development Education from OISE at the University of Toronto. His Postdoctoral project, "Liberal Arts Education in Asia: Through the Lens of Decolonization," won the Postdoctoral Fellowship of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His research explores how higher education models in different social



contexts contribute to students' capabilities development and future life flourishing. His research interests include liberal arts education, the role of universities and colleges in a changing society, outcomes of higher education through the capabilities approach, student development, and success through the lens of social justice.

**Zaira Navarrete-Cazales** is a Professor of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She teaches pedagogy and gender studies. She is a National Researcher Level II. She earned a PhD in Educational Research from the Department of Educational Studies at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute. She was honored with the "Premio Arturo Rosenblueth 2016" for the best doctoral thesis in Social Sciences and Humanities and the "National University Distinguished Young Scholars Award 2023" for Teaching in Humanities. Her research interests include policies for inclusion, the construction of identities, the history of pedagogy, and comparative and international education. She participated in 12 editorial boards and as reviewer in another 20. She is an Honorary President of the Iberoamerican Society of Comparative Education and the Mexican Society of Comparative Education. She has published books, chapters, and articles.

**Renata Nowakowska-Siuta**, PhD, is Professor in Education and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at The Christian Academy of Theology in Warsaw. She is a Specialist in Comparative Education and Educational Policy in Europe. She finished her master's in Education in 1994 at the University of Warsaw, obtained the PhD title at the University of Warsaw in 1998, habilitated in 2009 at The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, and obtained a Professorship in 2020. She is an expert evaluator with several programs of scientific exchange and research (including European Commission Horizon 2020, National Erasmus + Agency & European Solidarity Corps, The National Centre for Research and Development, and Foundation for Polish Science). She has been awarded for her scientific, didactical, and organizational merits by the state, chancellors, foundations, and students. She is also a member and Specialist of the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

**Alvaro Otaegui** is a Sociologist with a master's degree in Sociology from Alberto Hurtado University and a master's in Public Policies from the University of Chile. Presently, he is working as an Analyst and Project Manager at the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of Education Quality (LLECE) under UNESCO. Previously, he held the position of Research Manager at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. His current primary research areas include social inequalities, education, and evaluation of social programs and policies.

**Carlos Ornelas** is Professor of Education and Communications at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Xochimilco Campus in Mexico City. His teaching experience includes being Visiting Professor at Hiroshima University, Visiting

Professor of Comparative Education and Transcultural Studies at Teacher College Columbia University, and Visiting Lecturer and Fulbright Scholar in Residence at Harvard University Graduate School of Education. He earned a PhD in Education (1980) and an MA in International Education from Stanford University (1978). He is the author of 7 books as a single author, editor or co-editor of 15 other books, 60 chapters in academic compilations, and 39 articles in professional journals (in Spanish, English, and French). He has also authored 99 reviews, extended essay reviews, and other professional articles. He is also the author of 22 additional unpublished policy and research reports. He writes a column each week in *Excélsior*, a Mexican national newspaper.

**Michael O'Shea**, PhD, is a higher education scholar and practitioner passionate about supporting student success and building more equitable, democratic education systems. Supported by competitive Canadian and US federal and university research grants, his interdisciplinary research probes equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization questions in higher education policy and governance, Indigenous student mobility, qualitative methods, and science (astronomy) education. A proud product of the City of Chicago and its public schools, he has worked in a range of higher education, K-12, community non-profit, and public service roles in the USA and Canada. He has lent his energy to serving organizations that strengthen advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonizing agendas – including the New Leaders Council, a national progressive organization, and the Massey College Anti-Black Racism Council. In recognition of both his scholarship and community service, he has been awarded a Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Grant, New Leaders Council Fellowship, Massey College Fellowship, Fulbright Student Award, among others. His published work has appeared in *The Walrus*, *Irish Echo*, *Irish-American News*, *National Post*, *Hill Times*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *University Affairs*, *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, and *Higher Education Policy*.

**Francisco O. Ramirez** is the Vida Jacks Professor of Education and (by courtesy) Sociology at Stanford University. His current research interests focus on the worldwide rationalization of university structures and processes and on terms of inclusion issues as regards gender and education. His recent publications may be found in *Sociology of Education*, *Comparative Education Review*, *Social Forces*, and *International Sociology*. He is also the Co-editor of *Universities as Agencies: Reputation and Professionalization* (2019). His work has contributed to the development of the world society perspective in the social sciences and in international comparative education. He was the Director of the Scandinavian Consortium for Organizational Studies at the Graduate School of Education at Stanford (2017–2022). He has been a Fellow at the Center for the Advanced Studies of the Behavioral Sciences (2006–2007) and at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies (2017). He has been inducted into the honor societies of the American Sociological Association and the Comparative and International Education Society.

**Marcin Rojek**, PhD in Education, is a researcher, lecturer, and teacher trainer at the University of Lodz, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Poland. His research interests are adult education, especially teacher intergenerational learning, teacher workplace learning, learning from working life, students mobility, and digital tools in education. He published two monographs and several articles in this research field. He took part in several European and national funding research projects where he paid attention to how adults learn in formal and non-formal educational situations and what is digital tools role in intergenerational learning. He cooperates with scientists from Latvia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. He participated four times in Lifelong Learning Erasmus Intensive Programme and conducted academic internships in Arhus University. He is initiator and coordinator of the university's cooperation with employers and the social partners. He is also involved in improving the quality of education at the University of Lodz.

**Benjamin D. Scherrer** completed his PhD at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Education Policy where he was a W.E.B. Du Bois Fellow. His scholarship draws from Black Studies, political ecology, and critical cartographic methods. In his current project on flooding and ongoing catastrophes, he examines climate change education through methods of epistemic deciphering across the curriculum. He is interested in educational practices located materially outside or outdoors, in esthetic engagement with affective elements that enliven what is put on the page. He has been a public school teacher, school founder, and curriculum author.

**Jieun Song** is a doctoral candidate in the International and Comparative Education and the Sociology of Education at Stanford University. Her research interests revolve around equitable and inclusive education, global initiatives and discourses and their impact on national education policies and practices, and the evolving roles and expectations for universities. She often employs quantitative methods with longitudinal, cross-national data to explore these issues. Her dissertation investigates how education for marginalized groups and individuals has evolved over time globally and in US higher education and the kinds of sociocultural factors that have shaped these changes. She is currently involved in the Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education project as well as the World Education Reform Database project at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Prior to starting doctoral studies, she worked for the Korean National Commission for UNESCO as a Program Specialist in the education and culture sectors, engaging in important discussions around education for all and cultural diversity.

**Rebecca Stroud**, PhD, is a K-12 teacher, an adjunct instructor, and a researcher, drawing from intersectionality, intercultural learning, and interdisciplinary scholarship, most notably in education and sociology. She is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Carleton University conducting comparative and international research on youth homelessness prevention. She has recently been awarded an Social Science Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at Wilfrid Laurier University

to explore inclusive education at international schools, at the intersections of “special education,” international host cultures, and school leadership. Other projects include youth mentoring, educational leadership, service learning, community programs for underserved youth, student, and teacher well-being, and systemic factors contributing to experiences of student marginalization. She is a published poet, she writes short fiction, hikes, and enjoys spending time outdoors and traveling.

**Elżbieta Szulewicz** is a PhD candidate in Doctoral School of Social Sciences, University of Lodz, Poland. Her research interests are related to constructivist didactics, schoolwork methods, early school education, and broadly understood education. She conducts research on the ways of working of teachers, who in their activities are guided by the interests and needs of their students. She took part in Erasmus projects concerning young people withdrawing from school. The goal was to create tools to help teachers and educators work with students. In 2023, she joined as a scholarship holder a project on a comparative study of the functions of international programs in Poland.

**Amrit Thapa** is Senior Lecturer in the International Educational Development Program at Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania (Penn GSE). He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Economics from Sri Sathya Sai University, India, and MPhil and PhD in Economics and Education from Columbia University. He is also a Research Affiliate at Penn’s Population Studies Center, a Fulbright Specialist, an Affiliated Researcher for the Center for Benefit–Cost Studies of Education at Penn GSE, Consultant to UNESCO Institute of Statistics, and an Advisory Board Member of the *International Journal of Educational Development*. In 2019, he was honored with the prestigious Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award. Prior to Penn GSE, he worked as a Research Director at the National School Climate Center, an educational non-profit organization, where he was involved in a number of school climate-related projects such as development and validity/reliability studies of school climate/SEL metrics. He was honored with the prestigious 2019 Penn GSE Excellence in Teaching Award.

**Anastasia Toland** is an undergraduate student at Loyola University Chicago. Majoring in Political Science and minoring in Criminal Justice and Sociolegal Studies, she has focused her academic career around engaging in policy and the legal system. She is recognized as both an Interdisciplinary Honors student and a Political Science Honors student.

**C. C. Wolhuter** has studied at the University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria, the University of South Africa, and the University of Stellenbosch. His doctorate was awarded in Comparative Education at the University of Stellenbosch. He is former Junior Lecturer in the Department History of Education and Comparative Education at the University of Pretoria, and former

Senior Lecturer in the Department of History of Education and Comparative Education at the University of Zululand. Currently, he is Comparative and International Education Professor at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa, and Adjunct Professor, University of Fort Hare, South Africa. He is the author of several articles and books in the fields of History of Education and Comparative and International Education. He has been Visiting Professor at i.a. Brock University, Ontario, Canada; Mount Union University, Ohio, USA; University of Crete, Greece; University of Queensland, Australia; Driestar Pedagogical University, Netherlands; Canterbury Christ University, UK; Mauritius Institute of Education, Mauritius; The University of Namibia; University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy; Mata Bel University, Slovakia, Boris Grinchenko University, Ukraine; the Education University of Hong Kong; The University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Tarapaca University, Chile, and San Martin University, Argentina.

**Will L. H. Zemp** is an international education professional with six years of experience in the ESL sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He holds a Master of Science in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. A teacher by trade, he is passionate about teachers' rights and recognizing educators as key agents of change within education systems. His specific areas of interest lie at the intersection of emergent technology, impact assessment, and educational development with regional focuses in the MENA, West/Central Asia, and the Caucasus.

# PREFACE

As the *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education* enters its second decade of continuous publication, it is a good time to re-evaluate the purpose of an annual review and how it is specifically relevant to the field of comparative and international education. In the inaugural *Annual Review*, Wiseman and Anderson (2013) articulated the vision of an annual review becoming a tool for both reflective practice among those who identify with comparative and international education and a medium through which the field could both professionalize and coalesce. This ambitious vision persists; however, in those 10 years in between the world has changed dramatically in ways that were unpredictable at the time the inaugural volume was prepared. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, created a fundamental shift in – and in many ways both broke and re-oriented – formal education worldwide (Grek & Landri, 2021). Global crises have resulted in the most documented forced migration of humans that has ever been experienced worldwide, even in times of world war (Fransen & de Haas, 2019). A rise in populist politics and fascist-like regimes worldwide has called into question the effectiveness of mass education for creating democratic citizens and systems (Sant, 2021). And, new technologies employing artificial intelligence have disrupted the ways that people work, think, communicate, and exchange information, ideas, goods, and services (Zhai et al, 2021). Even though these changes and others may seem like insurmountable challenges, they have both inspired and required innovations and unique entrepreneurial approaches to teaching, learning, and other aspects of education, which have been necessary to continue the work of education regardless of other ongoing challenges (e.g., González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022).

Since 2013, the *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education* has published both clear review-oriented pieces (e.g., Turner, 2022) as well as more empirical studies of comparative and international education (e.g., Polat & Arslan, 2022) over the first decade, but one of the shifts moving forward from the editorial team should and will be a more purposeful attempt to review the past in order to understand what is happening in education during the review year. This may mean a reduction in the number of empirical studies published in the *Annual Review*, but it may also increase the number of meta-analyses and meta-syntheses published as part of the review each year. Another focus of the *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education* that has been a challenge during its first decade is the review or analysis of professional practice in the field, especially by development organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other entities outside of traditional educational systems and schools. So much of education occurs outside of formal, national systems (e.g., Tisza et al., 2020) that it is imperative to examine and review education and educational influences originating outside of formal, mass schooling. Therefore, a specific effort should and will

be made to focus more evenly on comparative and international education taking place inside traditional education systems but also to the education and educational influences that comprise both the public and private sectors as well as informal and non-formal teaching and learning occurring outside of formal education.

At the same time, less emphasis on establishing comparative and international education as a distinct field and more recognition and review of ways that comparative and international education is celebrated and incorporated into other disciplines is needed in the *Annual Review*. Social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, and economics have produced just as much, if not more, comparative and international education research, and professionals working in the field of comparative and international education, especially in development and policy roles, are rarely if ever trained in comparative and international education specifically (e.g., Jones, 2007). So, instead of wishing or willing a distinct field or discipline of comparative and international education to exist, the *Annual Review's* editorial team should and will be more explicit about the contributions and contributors to the field coming from other disciplines and from non-education-specific sources.

With these challenges and objectives in mind, the second decade of the *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education* will continue to be a foundation for reflective practice in the field and for the development and enhancement of comparative and international education research and practice.

Alexander W. Wiseman

Editor, *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education*  
Series Editor, *International Perspectives on Education and Society*

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# COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ENTERING A NEW CENTURY: IMPRESSIONS GLEANED FROM THE *REVIEW*

C. C. Wolhuter<sup>a</sup>, Oscar Espinoza<sup>b</sup> and  
Noel McGinn<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>North-West University, South Africa

<sup>b</sup>Universidad de Tarapaca, Chile

<sup>c</sup>Harvard University, USA

## ABSTRACT

*This paper takes stock of developments in, and the state of, the field of comparative and international education at the beginning of the 21st century, using as data base articles published in the journal Comparative Education Review during the second decade of the 21st century and to compare results with a content analysis done on the first 50 years of the existence of the Review and which was published in 2008. The 246 articles that were published in the Comparative Education Review during the decade 2010–2019 were analyzed under the following metrics: levels of analysis of articles; number of units covered by articles; research methods; narrative basis; phase of education articles cover; and mode of education articles deal with. Compared to the first 50 years of the existence of the Review, single-unit national-level studies still dominate the field, though less so. A case can be made out for a deconcentration to allow more space for research at geographic levels both larger and smaller than the nation-state. The most prominent narrative in which articles*



are framed is that of the social justice narrative. The neo-liberal economic narrative stands strong too, while the poor standing of the human rights narrative is disappointing. Turning to modes and phases of education is concerned, the shadow education system has registered on the comparative and international education research agenda, while there seems to be a modest upswing in interest in pre-primary education. Thoughts about the future trajectory of the field are suggested.

**Keywords:** Comparative and international education; *Comparative Education Review*; human capabilities theory; human rights; international test series; journal analysis; neo-liberal economics; shadow education system; social justice

## INTRODUCTION

Comparative and international education has been typified as a field of scholarship that is gaining new relevance in a changing world (Powell, 2020). On the other hand, it has also been described as a field where there is constantly much discussion of the future road the field should take and has also been criticized as a field that is not remotely living up to its potential (Wolhuter, 2008). Such a situation necessitates regular stocktaking and attendant critical reflection as to the state of the field. One method of gaining a picture of the state of the field is a content analysis of the articles published in its most esteemed journals, as has been done by scholars in the field such as Schweisfurth (2015), Davidson et al. (2017), Nordtveit (2016), Flessa et al. (2021), Jing et al. (2023), Schweisfurth et al. (2020), and Wolhuter (2008).

The aim of this research was to take stock of the field of comparative and international education by means of a content analysis of the articles published recently over a decade in one of the top (based on impact factor) journals in the field – the *Comparative Education Review* or, in short, the *Review*. Based on an analysis of the articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* during the decade 2010–2019, this paper constructs a picture of the current state of comparative and international education. As a base reference point, the paper will use the results of a content analysis of the articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* during the first 50 years of its existence, from 1957 to 2006 (Wolhuter, 2008). This will indicate movements in the field during the decade 2010–2019, compared to the state of the field in the past.

## LITERATURE SURVEY

Comparative and international education has been described as an amorphous field (see Bereday, 1957; Halls, 1990; Wilson, 1994), a field neither stable nor well defined (Nordtveit, 2015), or an eclectic, diverse field with adjustable borders

and contours that are difficult to demarcate (Epstein & Carroll, 2005), but at the same time also as a dynamic or even an infinite field, constantly testing new frontiers (Wolhuter & Wiseman, 2019) and aiming to adjust and rise to the occasion brought about by new times and contexts (Arnove, 2001). That it is a field with a growing corpus of literature accumulating at an increasing rate is clear from Easton's (2016) analysis of the *Comparative Education Review* bibliography, which was published annually in the Review (until discontinued in 2015). Easton traces the growth of the *Comparative Education Review* bibliography and describes it as "galloping." The number of references increased from 606 in 1990 to 1,232 in 2000, to 2,071 in 2010, and to 4,300 in 2015 (Easton, 2016). Indeed, reflecting on his experience as the editor of the *Comparative Education Review* for 10 years, 2013–2023, and studying the archives of the journal since its inception in 1957, Nordtveit (2023, p. 701) remarks that the rate of change in the field, as reflected in publications in the journal, is accelerating.

An analysis of articles published during the first 50 years of the history of the *Comparative Education Review* (1957–2006) came to the conclusion that during that half century in the Review, two equally strong trends were visible in the field – a remarkable resilience or constancy amid a broadening of the field (Wolhuter, 2008). While new vistas that were beckoning were constantly identified by scholars active in the field, at the same time, strong inertia was detectable, as scholars tenaciously stuck to established traditions and patterns of scholarship (Wolhuter, 2008). This inertia prevented the field from developing to its maximum capacity and use. The inertia hampering the field was evident in four aspects of scholarship: the methodology that scholars used, the paradigms extant in the field, the modes of education, and the phases of education that scholars tended to focus on (Wolhuter, 2008).

To commence with research methods, some comparativists argue that "comparison" is a research methodology in itself (Schriewer, 2014, see also Manzon, 2011, pp. 158–177). Erwin Epstein (2008) maintains that comparative education is nothing but an applied study; that is, the conceptual and methodological tools of the entire range of social sciences are applied to solve education problems or challenges. However, it can also be argued that comparative and international education has a dual nature, simultaneously being a field of study with a clearly specified object of study and representing a method of study (Wolhuter, 2024). The object of study is then education systems in their societal contextual interrelationships. Various education systems in their societal contextual interrelationships are compared to highlight these interrelationships and to gain a more complete understanding of education systems and the interrelationships between education systems and their societal contexts (Wolhuter, 2024). However, even conceding that comparative education is a method or contains an element of the method of comparison, in carrying out this comparison, other methods of research are subsumed.

In the published analysis of the first 50 years of the *Comparative Education Review*, it was found that, despite all the clamor of the field entering a social science phase in the 1960s, with an attendant quantitative revolution, a literature

study remained the most common method of conducting research, although its dominance declined over those 50 years (Wolhuter, 2008). During the first five years of the journal, 72% of the articles it published were on research entailing a literature study as method. This decreased to 48% during the last five years of the first 50 years (Wolhuter, 2008). The second most common research method, making its appearance in the 1960s (the time of the proclaimed social science phase), was the calculation of correlation coefficients (Wolhuter, 2008). The conclusion reached in the analysis was that this was a very limited selection of the range of social science research methods that scholars in the field employed, to the detriment and impoverishment of the field.

The article that surveyed the first 50 years of the *Review* analyzed the paradigmatic affiliation of the articles it had published (Wolhuter, 2008). Analyzing the paradigmatic affiliation of authors and publications was judged to be important, as a paradigm specifies what kind of problems or issues scholars regard as worthy of being studied and what concepts and methods are viewed as legitimate. In that analysis, it was found that, despite theoreticians of the field proclaiming that the field was beset by an impressive and growing assortment of paradigms as a hallmark of its stage of development (e.g., Epstein, 1983; Jules et al., 2021; Paulston, 1977, 1994, 1996, 1999; Psacharopoulos, 1990; Rust, 1991), actual studies on education remained tenaciously stuck in the two conventional, historical frameworks, namely the factors and forces framework and the framework of structural functionalism. These two frameworks stem from, respectively, the 1930s and 1960s (see Epstein, 1983; Noah & Eckstein, 1969; Stone, 1983), and in view of developments in both the scholarly world (e.g., Jules et al., 2021; Suter et al., 2019) and the world of education practice (e.g., Baker, 2014; Coombs, 1968, 1985; Wolhuter & Wiseman, 2022a, 2022b), now seem to be anachronistic.

Turning to foci on various phases of education, the analysis of articles published during the first 50 years of the *Comparative Education Review* found that the two main foci were higher education and secondary education. While over those 50 years, the exact proportion of articles dealing with these two phases varied, typically over any five-year period, roughly 20% of the articles published focused on higher education and 15% on secondary education (Wolhuter, 2008). Criticism was expressed about the low interest in pre-primary education (at most 2% of the articles in any five-year cycle), adult education (less than 10%), and primary education (10% or less of the articles in any five-year cycle).

Finally, turning to mode of education, this was perhaps the aspect of scholarship where the feature of scholars being stuck in trodden paths, thereby impoverishing the field, was most evident. The article that analyzed the first 50 years of the *Comparative Education Review* recognized four modes of education. The first three – formal, informal, and nonformal education – are used as defined by Phillip Coombs (1985). As in the article reviewing the first 50 years of the *Review*, a fourth category was added, namely pre-formal education. Pre-formal refers to what children learn from family, especially parental influences, especially in the years before formal schooling commences (Wolhuter, 2008).

Throughout the first 50 years of the existence of the *Review*, over 90% of the articles it published focused on formal education. The comment was made that in view of the rise of stimuli of informal education (television and the Internet) and in-service training, the existence of ample (occupation and other) training systems outside of the formal education system, and the impact of the preschool years on the subsequent lives of students, there are strong imperatives for scholars to give more attention to informal, nonformal, and pre-formal education. In view of the rise of social media and fake news, also noted by scholars of comparative and international education (e.g., Nordtveit, 2023, pp. 703–704), the call for more attention to the informal mode of education is even more compelling today than in 2008.

This need is even more accentuated with the rise of artificial intelligence, underscored by the sudden emergence of ChatGTP. ChatGTP was released in 2022, and a year later, in 2023, it became the fastest growing computer software in history (Hu, 2023, as cited by Nordtveit, 2023, p. 704). Similarly, in view of the importance of family background in the overall life and development of children and young people (e.g., Acar et al., 2018), also noted in comparative and international education circles (e.g., in 2020 the journal *Comparative Education* had a Special Issue on “Competing Interests: Parents, schools and nation states”; see also Proctor et al., 2020), more attention by comparative and international education scholars to the pre-formal mode of education is needed too.

Evidently, there is now a need to investigate whether scholars have, in recent times, moved away or evolved from the historical patterns of scholarship regarding methodology, narratives, and the phases and modes of education.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The 246 articles that were published in the *Comparative Education Review* during the decade 2010–2019 were analyzed in terms of the following parameters:

- research methods;
- narrative bases (i.e., in which of the four basic narratives extant in the field the article falls);
- the phase of education (pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education, post-secondary education, or higher education) the article covers; and
- the mode of education (formal, non-formal, informal, pre-formal education, and supplementary tutoring) the article deals with.

These four parameters were chosen because they deal with features that have, as emerged in the literature survey above, simultaneously defined the field and prevented the field from reaching its maximum potential. This statement is explained and substantiated with respect to each parameter, as the results of the investigation of each parameter are now discussed in turn.

The research method followed in this study is not a review (not any of the 14 review types identified by Grant & Booth, 2009) but a content analysis (see Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Content analysis is an established and accepted method of research in the social sciences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Content analysis entails a systematic coding and categorizing approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of the words used, their frequency, their relationships, and the structures and discourses of communication (Gbrich, 2007; Mayring, 2000; Pope et al., 2006; Sarantakos, 1998). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) describe the steps of content analysis as follows:

1. The researcher selects the specific material to be studied.
2. The researcher decides on the features to be studied.
3. The features are divided into small, manageable segments or categories.
4. The material is investigated with respect to the features of Step 2 and the categories of Step 3.

Subjecting leading journals to content analysis is an accepted and time-tested method of gaining a picture of the state of a particular scholarly field, including in comparative and international education (see, e.g., Davidson et al., 2020; Jing et al., 2023; Manzon, 2011; Wolhuter, 2008).

## RESULTS

### *Research Methods Employed by Scholars*

This paper differs from the approach of the analysis of research methods published in the article that reviewed the first 50 years of the *Review* (Wolhuter, 2008). In the current paper, a distinction is made between three levels of research methods. Following Robson (2011), whose framework for research methods was also used by the publication of Val Rust et al. (1999) on research methods in comparative education, this paper distinguishes between research methods on three levels. These are the level of data collection, methods at the level of data processing, and methods at the level of data interpretation. In surveying the articles used as the source for this analysis, the reality that transpired was that researchers used a variety of methods, which could comfortably be categorized into the three levels of methods of data collection, methods of data processing, and methods of data interpretation.

### *Methods of Data Collection*

The frequency of each of the 10 most used data collection methods, instruments of data collection, or sources of data collection is presented in Table 1.

A small number of methods, sources, or instruments of data collection dominate. While literature studies and documents were the prime method of data collection (75 of the 246 articles), as it was for the first 50 years of the *Review*, it is

**Table 1.** Frequency of the 10 Most Used Data Collection Methods, Sources of Data Collection, or Instruments of Data Collection.

Method	Number of Articles
1. Literature survey and documentary analysis	75
2. Existing data sets (PISA <sup>a</sup> and IEA <sup>b</sup> test results, UNESCO data, census data, PIAAC <sup>c</sup> , and national test series results)	67
3. Interviews	53
4. Questionnaires	15
5. Observation	7
6. Artefacts and work of students (e.g., essays), textbooks, or newspapers	7
7. Tests	4
8. Focus group discussions	4
9. Experiments	2
10. Own experience, autobiographies	2

<sup>a</sup>PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment.

<sup>b</sup>IEA: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

<sup>c</sup>PIAAC: The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 24 countries of cognitive and workplace skills.

no longer as dominating (see [Wolhuter, 2008](#)). What is new is the rise of the use of large data sets. This method constitutes the second most common method of data collection (67 of the 246 articles). Hence it seems that Martin Carnoy's (2019) depiction of a general preoccupation with big data as the hallmark of the current phase in the development of the field at Stanford University is an accurate comment on developments in the field at large. This method reflects the rise of international league tests in the world in the past quarter of a century (especially the International Programme for Student Assessment of PISA tests since 2001), the importance of which in turn, can be traced back to the neo-liberal economic revolution and the place of education or human capital in the competition between nations in a competitive globalized world. It should be mentioned that the international league tests and the importance attached to these tests have drawn its share of criticism too, including from scholars in the field (see [Denman, 2019](#); [Meyer & Benavot, 2013](#)).

The third most common method of data collection was interviews. Fifty-three articles in the *Review* had interviews as the prime method of data collection. This can be related to the standing of qualitative research in the social sciences in general and in comparative education in particular – a backlash that has developed since the elevation of quantitative methods in the 1960s.

The value of autobiography as data collection method in comparative and international education research has recently been illustrated in the Doctoral Degree dissertation of [Kamani \(2021\)](#), in the Comparative and International Education Society Presidential Address of Karen Mundy (2016), and in the publication of renowned comparativist David Turner (2022) and is slowly registering in articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* too. The same can be said about observation as a method of data collection. This is also shown in the

*Comparative Education Review.* The call for observation to be used as a method of data collection by comparativists is also evident in recent comparative and international education literature, for example, in the recently published article of [Luoto \(2023\)](#). The employment of observation as a data collection method by scholars in the field has also been facilitated and made more attractive by the development of measuring instruments such as the International System for Observation and Feedback (ISTOF).

#### *Methods of Data Processing*

The frequency of each of the 10 most used data-processing methods is presented in [Table 2](#).

As in the case of methods of data collection, a few methods of data processing dominate. The most common method is a synthesis of information collected, which ties in with literature and documents being the most common sources of data collection. The second most used method is correlation and regression analyses (and related methods, such as factor analysis), which is consistent with an expectation of using large databases as data sources.

#### *Methods of Data Interpretation*

Based on the explanation above as to what comparative and international education entails, it can be argued that the use of the comparative method is part of the essential features of the field of comparative and international education. Furthermore, this method, as used in comparative and international education, is aimed at an explication of the interrelations between education (systems) and their societal contexts. Also, the comparative method is a method of interpretation. The overwhelmingly largest part of the articles surveyed in the study displayed this method of data interpretation: 221 in total. The few others, while they all could comfortably fit into this method of data interpretation, explicitly used one of the following acknowledged methods of data interpretation: symbolic interactionism, ethnography, phenomenology, critical ethnography, and methodological individualism.

**Table 2.** Frequency of the 10 Most Used Data-Processing Methods.

Method of Data Processing	Number of Articles
1. Synthesis of information collected	116
2. Calculation of correlation, regression coefficients, effect sizes, factor analysis, and diffusion analysis	74
3. Content analysis	13
4. Inferential statistics and calculation of probabilities	12
5. Descriptive statistics	9
6. Discourse analysis	7
7. Historical reconstruction	6
8. Critical discourse analysis	2
9. Reflection	2
10. Phenomenography	2

To summarize the information on research methods, while the assortment of methods with which scholars in the field let themselves be served has widened compared to the past, a limited sample of the rich range of available research methods in the social sciences (see Morin et al., 2021) is still dominating the field.

### *Narratives*

In the analysis reported in this paper, the authors opted to use the notion of narratives as a heuristic device, for reasons explained (Wolhuter et al., 2022). A narrative, being defined as a story or account of events (Ibid.), is believed to be a more meaningful depiction of what takes place in the field. Mapping the field along the dimension of narratives, having identified a small number of narratives, provides a more easily digestible or comprehensible panoptic view of the field than the identification of a large number of paradigms. Another major reason for opting for the notion of narratives is that these, being present in both the (comparative and international education) scholarly and the public discourse of education, also serve to bridge the theory – practice gap – a long-standing problem in the field that has been pointed out by many scholars (e.g., Psacharopoulos, 1990, in his Comparative and International Education Presidential Address; Welch, 2000). The following four narratives, identified by Wolhuter et al. (2022), were taken for the analysis reported in this paper: capabilities theory, the neo-liberal economic narrative, the human rights narrative, and the social justice narrative. The frequency of the different narratives in the articles surveyed is presented in Table 3.

The fact that all four narratives register visibly in publications indicates a broadening of the field and moving with the times, from the fixation on the forces and factors paradigm and the structural functionalism paradigm that dominated until the end of the 20th century. However, on the relative salience of the four narratives, a few notes are apt.

The strongest of the four narratives are the social justice and neo-liberal economics narratives. The strong position of the social justice narrative can be linked to a number of factors. These include the function of the university to critique society and act as its conscience, as well as longstanding traditions or strands in comparative and international education. These traditions include the following: (1) the quest for equality or equity in education as a dominant motive for both the expansion and the reform of education (see Espinoza, 2007; Farrel, 1999); (2) over the past 70 years, the significance or purpose of the field as an ameliorative force in society (see Levin & Kelley, 1994; Lutz & Klingholz, 2017; Switzer, 2018; Unterhalter et al., 2014; Wolhuter, 2017); and (3) the existence of theories

**Table 3.** Number of Articles Being Part of Various Narratives.

Narrative	Number of Articles
Capabilities theory	30
Neo-liberal economics narrative	95
Human rights narrative	29
Social justice narrative	92



such as socio-economic reproduction, cultural reproduction, neo-colonialism, and post-colonialism – all are very strong within the field (see [Gerber & Hout, 1995](#); [Jules et al., 2021](#)).

The strong standing of the neo-liberal narrative can be linked to the largely undisputed and unchecked free rein with which neo-liberal economics has operated in most of the world for the past 30 years (see [Stiglitz, 2019](#)) also as a driving force of education reform (see [Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2019](#)) and also to the rather instrumental use of large data tables in this regard (explained earlier). The rise of individualism, global competitiveness, and creativity may be factors explaining why some authors chose to fit their research into the narrative of the capability theory.

What is disappointing, and unexpected, is the poor standing of the human rights narrative. Although it has been criticized for limited participation in its drafting, the Creed of Human Rights has emerged as a moral code for the globalized world. The poor standing of the narrative of the Creed of Human Rights is also standing at variance with major events and drives in the world of education praxis, where the Creed of Human Rights is visible as one of the major drives of education expansion and reform, at both the national and the global levels (see [Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2019](#)). The right to education has been included in many national constitutions and education acts. At the global level, the narrative of education as a human right has provided an underpinning for the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), including its Human Rights Education drive and UNESCO declaring the decade 2005–2015 the Decade of Human Rights Education (see UNESCO, 2006), the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Education in 2011 ([United Nations, 2011](#)), and the Education for All movement.

The poor standing of the human capabilities narrative is also disappointing. In view of the rise of knowledge economies, their significance in a competitive, globalized world, and the role of the creative class in such economies, there seems to be much scope and much reason for the development of this narrative in the field. The value of this approach for education studies has been highlighted by scholars (e.g., [Walker & Unterhalter, 2007](#)), including scholars in the field of comparative and international education in particular (e.g., [Khanal et al., 2023](#)). In the most recent Comparative and International Education (CIES) Presidential Address, Supriya Baily (2023) links the merits of a capability approach to the issue of social justice, arguing that social justice can only be obtained if people are accorded the agency to realize their vision/ideals through their capabilities.

### *Phases*

The frequency of articles focusing on the various phases of education is presented in [Table 4](#).

The preponderance of articles focuses on secondary (especially) or primary education. This corresponds to the pattern during the first 50 years of the *Review* (see [Wolhuter, 2008](#)). Compared to the patterns then, the substantial interest in higher education has been sustained during the 10-year period of 2010–2019 (understandable in view of the global higher education revolution, see [Altbach](#)

**Table 4.** Frequency of Articles Focusing on Various Phases of Education.

Phase(s)	Number of Articles
All phases or no focus on any particular phase	30
Pre-primary	8
Primary	23
Secondary	68
Primary and secondary	65
Primary, secondary, and post-secondary	1
Secondary and post-secondary	1
Post-secondary	2
Primary, secondary, and higher	1
Higher	36
Adult	10
Lifelong learning	1

et al., 2010). There seems to be a small but growing interest in pre-primary education. While a case can be made that since 1990, the world has experienced a global higher education revolution and that (relative to the 1990 base) the largest expansion of education in recent times was on the level of higher education, the importance of pre-primary education (evident again in the goals of the 2015 Incheon Declaration, spelling out a vision of universal pre-primary education of at least one year by 2030, see UNICEF, 2015). and adult education (against the background of, e.g., the changing age pyramid all over the world), the minuscule attention paid to pre-primary education and adult education is objectionable.

## MODES OF EDUCATION

In this analysis, another category was added to the four used in the analysis of the first 50 years of the *Comparative Education Review* (explained earlier), namely the shadow education system (or tutoring). This category has, more recently, become visible in education practice and in the field, including articles published from 2010 through 2019 in the *Review* (see Bray & Khubakidze, 2014) and also in publications (e.g., Bennell, 2023) and fora in the field outside the *Review*, for example Mark Bray's 2017 CIES Presidential Address (Bray, 2017).

The number of articles dealing with the various modes of education is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Number of Articles Focusing on Various Modes of Education.

Mode(s)	Number of Articles
Not mode-specific	11
Formal	204
Nonformal	18
Formal and nonformal	2
Informal	2
Pre-formal	3
Shadow education system	6

As was the case during the first 50 years of the *Review*, the preponderance of articles published during the period of 2010–2019 dealt with formal education, though now somewhat less so. There is a small rise in articles focusing on nonformal education. Different from the first 50 years, the shadow education system has now registered, and there is a small rise in articles dealing with pre-formal education as well. However, the persistent neglect of nonformal and especially informal education continues to impoverish the field. This is now even more cause for concern than was the case 20 years ago because of the rise of social media as a source of informal education (and, at that, a mode of education very controversial and challenging). So significant is the rise of social media and electronic media in (informal) education praxis that Strohmaier (2014) identifies it as a new mode of knowledge: Mode 3 knowledge – extending the classification of Gibbons et al. (2003) of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge. The imperative for scholars attending to nonformal and adult education is now more compelling too, in view of the rise of the continuing adult and old population pyramid worldwide, the emphasis now placed on lifelong learning (it is, e.g., mentioned explicitly in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals), and the rise of micro-credentials (visible in, e.g., the rise of MOOCS or mass online open courses, which were unknown 20 years ago – a topic attended to by none of the 246 articles surveyed). It is regrettable that the work of pioneer comparativists on adult and lifelong learning, Peter Jarvis (1937–2018) (see Arthur & Crossley, 2017, 2020; Holford, 2017), was not continued after his passing.

## CONCLUSION

Measured by the articles published in the *Comparative Education Review*, the recent decade (2010–2019) has been one of a marginal broadening of the field compared to past patterns, as pertaining to the research methods which scholars let themselves be served by, as well as by phase of education and mode of education being the object of scholarship. As far as research methods are concerned, what is new in the field is the use of mass databases, notably those containing the results of international test series. Turning to modes and phases of education, the shadow education system has registered on the comparative and international education research agenda, while there seems to be a modest upswing in interest in pre-primary education too. However, on all three facets of research methods, and modes of education, scholars in the field are not by a far stretch realizing the full potential of the field.

While there are articles that are linked to all the major narratives extant in the public discourse of education, the balance of these narratives is lopsided. The most prominent narratives detectable in the field are those of social justice and neo-liberal economics. The poor showing of the human rights narrative is disappointing. Turning to modes and phases of education, the shadow education system has registered on the comparative and international education research agenda, while there seems to be a modest upswing in interest in pre-primary education too.

At present, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought massive changes to education worldwide. The two most salient changes were the increase in home schooling (Hamlin & Peterson, 2022) (albeit more to supplement, rather than replace school education) and the harnessing of technology to assist teachers in teaching and learners in learning (Breslin, 2021). While it is uncertain how permanent these changes will prove to be, it can also be stated that it is unlikely that education will fully return to the old “normal.” This gives comparativists an opportunity to rise to the occasion to conduct research as to how home schooling and technology can be used to augment the effort in schools in a variety of contexts.

Much has certainly been learnt from the mining of large databases – one of the hallmarks of the field in the past generation (as has been shown by the analysis reported in this paper). But such large databases – at least in their existing form, for example, the results of the PISA test – seem at prima facie to be of limited value in the new tasks proposed for the field. Instead, more emphasis should be given to the study of home schooling (thus far eschewed by comparativists) as another mode of education, and then finer textured (geographical levels smaller than the nation state) analyses. This shift may address the imbalance of studies at various geographical levels (shown in this study). Changes in emphasis may improve the ability of the field to contribute to reforms intended to create more equitable, high-quality, lifelong education for all. This would help in the achievement of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the construction of humanity’s collective vision for education in the world of 2030.

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