



EDITORIAL

# Diverse Perspectives on Decolonizing the Field of Comparative and International Education

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The first issue in the tenth volume of the *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education* (NJCIE) addresses Diverse Perspectives on Decolonizing the Field of Comparative and International Education. Tavis d. Jules, Florin Salajan, Benjamin Scherrer, Anna Becker, and Tinesh Indrarajah initiated this issue to interrogate (post)coloniality and racial capitalism from multiple perspectives, positionalities, and cultural contexts. Identifying Smith's 2012 work on *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Smith, 2012) as a touchstone, they set out to question how Comparative and International Education (CIE) research is complicit in the reproduction of structural oppression, or cognitive (in)justice (Maurič & Scherling, 2021), calling for a structural shift in the field of CIE research.

There is a continued need to develop and maintain discourse on these points and on the valuable point of self-reflection as a necessity for the relevancy of research in the CIE field. Meanwhile, a kind of extensive structural change is already underway over the course of the last ten years or so. Not only in the field of CIE research, but in higher education, research environments, international relations and geopolitically. CIE research is directly affected by this as, e.g. education development NGOs have gotten



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funding withdrawn, or missions changed, in a policy climate that has become increasingly nationalist and belligerent. Researcher and student mobility has decreased. International research collaborations have lost funding and are scrutinized in light of national security concerns. Researchers are gagged by inhibitive national policies that seek to centralize power by pulling funding and dissuading basic research that would support social justice and allyship. This challenging turn can be described as a shift from neoliberal regimes to war regimes (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2024; Pasgaard & Astrup, 2025). A reorientation of policy priorities that seems to jeopardizes prior (insufficient) efforts to care for and address global challenges including socially and environmentally sustainable development (UN, 2015). New forms of structural inequalities, imperialism and abuses of power are witnessed across the world. I suggest we should not be discouraged by the fact that CIE as a field needs to self-reflect on abuses of power, this is part of good scholarly practice, and it is not a task that we will ever be done with. As society changes, this reflection should be renewed. Meanwhile, one of the features of CIE research that keeps bringing me back to the field despite struggles and challenges, are the efforts in allyship with colleagues from diverse backgrounds that this research has afforded me, to work together with colleagues to try to make sense of the challenges we face. I propose the added value that research in the CIE field brings depends on the plurality of perspectives that it is able to bring to a discourse on common good resources (Wiksten, 2021). CIE research matters to the extent it can contribute with information to feed a political will for better development. It is political will and changes in political will that determine the circumstances in which we will continue working for the development of education.

In this editorial, I highlight the three Forum pieces (Kubow et al., 2026; Kurshid et al., 2026; Richardson et al., 2026) on the relationship of new technology to education, that build on reflections from the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) 2025 conference. Specifically, the three essays draw on the so-called *Provocations* sessions, a panel format that was first introduced at CIES 2022. These panels represent a timely effort to attend to societal changes, themes, dynamics and developments that are contributing to bewilderment in education development today. More specifically, by proposing ways by which we can explore what we collectively in CIE can do. The themes of the CIES panels on which the Forum pieces draw were (1) *The Digital Turn: Considering the Implications for Teaching and Learning in the Field of Comparative and International Education (CIE)*; (2) *How are borders and belonging framed in the digital space?*; and (3) *Double-Edged Sword: How Digital Technology Is Reshaping and Transforming Our Modern Society*.

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The Forum contributions document some of the hopes, dreams, fears and animist ideas present in current discourses. This is very helpful as from a purely methodological perspective, we first need to document stances on the use of new technologies, in order to be able to move forward from the array of rational, practical, limited, irrational, emotion-driven, and multiple other takes on the use of new technology in education that proliferate (Tuomi et al., 2022). So that better judgement, reflection, relevancy, recognition of power asymmetries and their effects can be reflected on, and ethically addressed, in the uses of new technologies in education. Prior CIE research on the use of AI in education (Tuomi et al., 2022) has highlighted the importance of identifying the decision points where Large Language Learning Models and other automated software require input from human decisions. A related point has been raised by Torgersen and colleagues recently on the key role that cognisant decision making holds in the responsible use of digital communication tools (Torgersen et al., 2025). In this line, I propose also that teachers would benefit from the development of pedagogical decision-making skills. So that teachers are supported to develop autonomy and skills in choosing instruction methods and tools in a manner that responds flexibly to the different needs of the different groups of diverse learners that teachers work with (Wiksten, 2025).

I applaud the effort of Patricia Kubow, Iveta Silova, Will Brehm and Louise Mifsud in the Forum essay, *Comparative and International Education Research in an Era of Digital Acceleration, Democratic Backsliding, and Ecological Collapse*, on the possibilities for valuing human characteristics in CIE research, by investing time and energy in developing methods for using audio, or as the authors term it *sonic methods*. The essay is to the point in that the ways out of the bind that we seem to find ourselves in, surely require creative efforts. Some of the current fears in CIE research pertain to lacking latitude in movement. That is, whom we dare to collaborate with, the topics we dare to address, the travel we dare to do and other limitations. Limitations that seem to be imposed by various constraints of what seems a difficult situation. This calls on researchers in CIE to muster all the ingenuity we possibly can, including reconsidering our relationships to each other and our environment. This essay, as well as the work of e.g. Donna Haraway, and other interesting takes drawing on ethnographic research are helpful for thinking anew. For reimagining the different ways in which our research is entangled with the world and for attempting to find new paths forward (Haraway, 2016). As Haraway puts it, for not giving up, but for staying with the trouble.

The Forum piece with colleagues Ayesha Khurshid, Michael Thomas and Supriya Baily renders parts of a discussion on Framing borders and belonging in the digital space. Using an innovative approach in which

a conversation between Kurshid and colleagues is narrated, this essay presents a reflection on borders as places of belonging. Building on a critical legacy of Anzaldúa's conceptualization of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987), a discussion is elaborated on digital educational spaces as hybrid, fluid, and complex fusions of old and new, material and discursive, as well as human and non-human spaces. The authors problematize challenges arising from contemporary technological shifts such as the wide-spread access to AI and associated concerns about plagiarism at higher education institutions. Meanwhile, technology enabled digital spaces also create possibilities for citizen action, such as citizen journalism in places where mainstream journalists do not have access. A concrete example of this was provided e.g. by whistleblowers in China during the COVID-19 pandemic (Shen, 2021). Technologies are socially constructed (Feenberg, 1991) and thereby shaped by human values and political struggles. This Forum piece serves as a theoretically deft and innovative reflection on some of the ways in which assumptions associated with technology benefit from being problematized in comparative and international education analyses.

The essay prompts, among other questions, the question of who benefits from the normalisation of power that is shaped by how technologies are constructed? Specifically, whose interests are served by it and whose are not? Who and which social categories are by this constructed in society as the other? Intersectionality addresses the reality that social categories are associated with power relations that are known to eschew quality in research when representation of diverse social categories is lacking (Harding, 2009). In a critical pedagogy perspective, the ways in which digital technology is used for enforcing power relations in society should be problematized (Freire, 1970).

Whether findings from individual research projects find their way to the table of decision makers and the hands of practitioners is to some extent an outcome of effective dissemination of research findings, but ultimately a question of political will. Similarly, as the question of whether our societies will act on the steps needed for addressing the industrially produced challenges of climate change. I propose it is particularly in challenging times, important to ask questions such as "Whose culture? Whose knowledge? Whose technology?" (Cossa, 2021, p. 24). A plurality of perspectives is offered in this thematic issue to feed these important questions, not with final answers, but with valuable insights that are helpful for pointing out some possible paths forward.

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