

# FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education

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Volume 2

Issue 2 *Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education*

Article 1

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2015

## Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education - Guest Editors' Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Kubow, P. K., Wild, J., & Joslin, A. (2015). Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education - Guest Editors' Introduction. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol2/iss2/1>

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# Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education - Guest Editors' Introduction

## **Abstract**

Introduction to the *FIRE* Special Issue titled, "Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education".

## **Keywords**

internationalization, critical dialogue, global, education

## **GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION**

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### **Introduction**

The theme of this special issue of *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education* is "Reimagining Internationalization: Critical Dialogues on Global Dimensions of Education" based on the 2014 Midwestern Regional Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society (MCIES). The Comparative International Education Society (CIES) is an association of scholars within and outside of academia "dedicated to increasing the understanding of educational issues, trends and policies through comparative, cross-cultural and international perspectives" (CIES, 2015). In addition to its annual meeting, CIES supports regional conferences, which allow for scholarly engagement among colleagues in an intimate setting. The 2014 MCIES was held at Indiana University (IU), organized by graduate students in the School of Education, and supervised by Margaret Sutton. The Center for International Education, Development and Research (CIEDR) in the IU School of Education, directed by Patricia K. Kubow, served as a conference sponsor. In consultation with Justin Wild and A'ame Joslin, two graduate students who co-led the conference committee's outreach efforts, Kubow suggested curating a collection of research presented at the conference for a journal special issue, which *FIRE* generously agreed to support.

Comparative education research encourages investigators to examine how local, national, regional, and global forces shape educational policies and practices. Whether a scholar aims to describe educational systems, explore how educational issues in seemingly disparate parts of the world converge or diverge, or learn from foreign practices, comparative education offers analytic tools that allow for such studies. In deciding *what* can be known and *how* it can be known (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2009), researchers must consider the strengths and limits of comparative approaches and understand the frameworks guiding their analyses and findings. Comparative research, therefore, demands careful attention to theories and concepts, as well as the appropriate use of comparison to ensure usefulness and applicability in diverse cultural contexts.

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Reflected in the theme of this special issue, which mirrored the mission and title of the conference itself, is the desire to invite research that offers a critical approach to issues in comparative education.<sup>2</sup> We recognize, however, that not all research is conducted within a critical theory framework. Hence, our use of the term *critical dialogue* goes beyond critical theory to those areas in comparative education that are underdeveloped and deserve attention from the comparative education community, including academia where scholars can offer a critical voice to the educational issues and institutions that are of interest and importance to them. One of the tenants of critical work is an ability to formulate meaningful ideas of change beyond criticism of established practices (Levinson, 2011). Thus, scholars at all stages of their career, including established faculty and engaged graduate students, were encouraged to submit their work for consideration in this special issue, which offers readers new ideas and perspectives on familiar themes in comparative education.

The special issue begins with the article, “Critical Internationalization: Moving from Theory to Practice” by Fran Vavrus and Amy Pekol, based on Vavrus’ conference keynote address. The authors examine internationalization in higher education and offer important critique that examines the research practices of scholars from the Global North who engage with researchers and study participants from the Global South. Applying critical theory to explain three dimensions of internationalization (i.e., representational, political-economic, and symbolic capital), the authors reveal the inequitable structures underlying internationalization in an effort to redress them. In “Faculty Internationalization Priorities,” John R. Criswell II and Hao Zhu present a qualitative study that explores faculty members’ perceptions of support for internationalization. They note that university administration may promote programs and facets of internationalization without consulting critical implementers of such programs, namely faculty. The authors examine the concerns faculty have with regard to their respective university’s efforts at internationalization and recommend that institutional leaders align internationalization policies with that of faculty priorities.

Moving from faculty engagement to teacher preparation, Jacob Chacko and Miranda Lin examine the benefits and challenges of international student teaching. They argue that pre-service teachers need experiences abroad to develop global perspectives and to prepare them for the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in U.S. classrooms. Drawing upon studies by Merry Merryfield and Laura Stachowski, also presenters at the MCIES conference, Chacko and Lin highlight the importance of academics to involve internationally those who are most responsible for implementing education policies in K-12 classrooms, namely teachers. The authors’ focus on supplementing practical teaching experience with international student teaching also engages the questions posed by Vavrus and Pekol regarding the degree of reciprocity between sending and receiving institutions in academic programs.

Two pieces in this special issue offer a glimpse into populations whose educational goals are not necessarily aligned with those of educational policymakers. Within the U.S., Shu-Chun Yu considers the motivations of Chinese immigrant parents for choosing Chinese Language Schools for their children to attend. As an educator in one such school, Yu reveals how parental desire for heritage language maintenance offered by Chinese language schools plays an important role in developing their children’s identity and social networks. Such schools, she argues, do not necessarily take away from policymakers’ educational aims. Within Upper Egypt, Mohamed Sallam critically explores the ways national and

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<sup>2</sup> For a brief history of comparative education, please see Arnove (2013). For current and enduring themes in comparative education, see Bray, Adamson, and Mason (2007), Kubow and Fossum (2007), and the National Research Council (2003). For a brief introduction of critical theory, see the introductory chapters of Anyon (2008), Dressman (2009), and Levinson (2011).

international policy discussions shape the construction and implementation of education development programs targeting girls and women. His study examines the differences between the goals of developers, implementers, and the actual participants of a second-chance girls' education initiative in rural Upper Egypt. Sallam's findings provide insight as to the varied ways in which "success" is defined by a host of stakeholders associated with the girls' education program. The article speaks to the complex intersections of marriage and education by exploring the power differentials that exist and reveals how some versions of success are considered more valuable than others.

In their article "Education as an Ethical Concern in the Global Era," Robert Arnove and Barry Bull advance the argument that comparative education has helped to develop, and can draw upon, philosophical resources to assist people in reaching normative judgments about global and international educational policies and practices, while also taking into consideration local cultural and sociopolitical contexts. The authors apply the philosophies of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to two cases: the education of girls and the education of children within counterhegemonic social movements. Arnove and Bull recognize that social and cultural contexts must be understood before applying analytical frameworks, and identifying the origins in which those frameworks were developed is equally important to critically evaluating educational programs and strategies worldwide.

Finally, this special issue offers two reviews of Shabana Mir's (2014) book, *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*. The first review is by Ariel Sincoff-Yedid and the second by Aziz Fatnassi. Each review presents an engaging reflection on Mir's work that uncovers the ways collegiate Muslim American women on two university campuses in the U.S. negotiate the challenges posed by their cultural environments: the campus, their Muslim community, and the dominant mainstream society. The book was chosen because Mir, an alumnus of Indiana University, was a highlighted speaker at the MCIES conference, and her presentation on diversity and internationalization in the context of global higher education and student culture on U.S. campuses emerged from her book.

Thus, the MCIES conference served as the stimulus for this special issue. It is our hope that the pieces within will help readers to reexamine critically the dialogues on education, globalization, and culture in their efforts to reimagine the possibilities of internationalization in postsecondary and K-12 settings around the world.

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