

## Editorial

The Indian education system is often described in overlapping yet contrasting terms: plural and highly selective; enabling and immobile; democratic and rigid. Despite its size and considerable institutional presence, as well as the popular desire for education, Indian education faces persistent challenges. An inadequate research infrastructure is among the most significant of these challenges. The journal, *Comparative Education Studies* (CES) will create an independent, rigorous, academic space for educational inquiry. As the flagship journal of the Comparative Education Society of India (CESI), the journal shares the vision and commitment of CESI, which has grown and flourished as an important organisation since its revival in 2010. As a new journal taking root this year with its first issue in December 2024, *CES* opens up possibilities for exploration, reflection, debates and dialogues.

As a discipline, education has witnessed dramatic changes in recent years. In addition to its institutionalisation in colleges and universities, multiple other locations and agencies are actively involved in research and practice. Grassroots organisations, NGOs, policy and advocacy groups are among the many actors that are involved in educational work.

As a domain close to the modern state and a vehicle of citizenship formation, education has also been tasked with the work of creating a common world which is structured by the principles of equality, freedom and justice. The imagination of a common world includes within itself an imagination of a citizen who is educated to be a part of the democratic processes and practices, who can participate in the political realm.

Discussions on privatization of education and the role of market forces in shaping education systems today has gained traction with questions of globalization, neoliberalism, state-market nexus and the receding nature of state funding becoming prominent concerns. Capital today is shaping education as a technical object, going beyond the conventional constraints of profit. New capital formations and market logic is entering into public institutions in an unprecedented manner. This necessitates fresh conversations and dialogues with new kinds of actors and markets that emerge from these multiple forms of privatisation.

Taking into consideration these contemporary conditions, the journal aims to create a comprehensive, participatory platform. What perspectives and ethos would be central to imagining a collaborative, critical praxis? In what ways do we create a welcoming space for

broad, multidisciplinary educational research while also being open to specialised domains? Collaborative work involves facing uneasy, uncomfortable truths while being fully committed to dialogue. Can this journal become a place to engage meaningfully and productively with contradictions and constraints by keeping a commitment to the ethics of participation?

A rather checkered history and growth of comparative education societies across the world, and the shifts in the frameworks of comparative education, can offer useful directions in this regard. While on stable ground and widely popular today, the domain of comparative education includes colonial logics and practices that routinely studied “the other.” Since its spread in the 1950s and through the geopolitics of the Cold War, comparative education in its early phase was largely steered by the ideals of scientific internationalism. A rejection of parochial ethnocentrism and a commitment towards plural national systems were part of the reasons why the comparative approach became popular in the Third World. While comparative education societies were set up in many countries of the Third World, comparativism could not escape the imperial and colonial shadows.

*Comparative Education Studies* will further educational research by locating itself firmly within the intellectual ecosystem of the Global South. We recognise diversity and differences between comparative education societies of the Global North and the South. By its sheer location and nature, educational research in the Global South, is firstly steered by the norms, theories and ideas of educational research, policy and reforms from the Global North; and, secondly, is shaped by the movement of ideas in the dominant disciplines. This takes a concrete shape in the unilateral transfer of policies and practices disadvantaging those at the receiving end. An informed response to this disadvantage need not come from the space of epistemic insecurity or arrogance. Can the educational endeavour in the Global South take the notion of this location seriously, where this peripherality is not about spatial or geographical indexing, but about the need for being closely connected to material and epistemological inequality. By giving space to what is conventionally rendered as invisible, excluded and silent, the journal affirms its positionality of being a limit point, where this marginality allows it to build alternate futures by examining the regimes of truth that constitute us as subjects in the first place.

The contributions to the first issue of *Comparative Education Studies* address significant thematics that are of interest to contemporary concerns in comparative education. These

include an engagement with the historical context of institutional practices that are taken for granted in educational institutions today as discussed by Rao in an article on the Monitorial system. Furthermore, one can contemplate new ways to engage with knowledge holistically across disciplines as suggested in Raina's article drawing attention to the significance of Schrödinger's *Science and Humanism*.

The research articles in the inaugural issue demonstrate the commitment of CES to engaging with populations on the margins. Farooqi's article follows the life of one school teacher and his work in inspiring and thinking of education outside elite academic spaces in an imaginative and democratic manner. Further, Manojan's contribution looks at an Adivasi community in Kerala and demonstrates the difficulties marginal populations face when educational regimes are unable to accord space to indigenous knowledge.

The journal also provides a space for commentaries to initiate conversation and dialogue on critical themes. For this issue Saxena addresses the stratification that exists in the government schooling system whereby a few exemplary institutions take attention away from others that require care and investment. In his commentary Kumar draws on an arts festival in Kerala to demonstrate how extracurricular activities become sites of competition and conflict. Finally, questions of peripherality are evoked by Sharma in her unsettling poem on refugees, the population that borders on disposability.

The contributions to the inaugural issue, research articles and commentaries, demonstrate the diverse methodologies used in conducting meticulous research and bringing out the complexities and facets of comparative education.

As an intellectual, research driven space, the *CES* stands for the continuation of the critical stance that CESI espouses, where critique, accompanied by an ethical perspective can deepen our understanding of the contemporary. It gives us immense pleasure to be part of *Comparative Education Studies*' journey!

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(Executive Editors)