

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSIGHTS

VOICES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE



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Foreword

This collection of essays offers important research insights into pressing concerns about education and development across the globe. This publication was conceived out of a shared recognition of the need to insert new voices into global conversations on the inadequacies of educational policy and practice. Each of the small-scale research studies has attended to key issues within specific contexts in ways that development agencies and organisations do not. As such the collection draws attention to significant yet under-researched concerns within the field and at the same time serves as academic resistance to gatekeeping of research outputs.

Driven by personal experience and interest and supported by in-depth study each author has constructed and conducted a research study according to strict ethical guidelines. These essays were initially developed as dissertation research studies

from the 2023/24 cohort of the MA in International Education and Development programme led by faculty from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex. Each was informed by theoretical explorations of education and development that cut across coloniality, gender, power, inequality, conflict and critical pedagogy among other themes of their coursework. The authors' contextual and theoretical interests were combined with methodological considerations that shaped their positionality and approach to their research. The contributions gathered here reflect diverse perspectives and contexts, underscoring the value of small-scale research that is often overlooked in mainstream discourse. While these studies may not draw on large population samples, they offer rich mostly qualitative insights that illuminate lived experiences, challenge prevailing assumptions, and provide foundations upon which future scholarship can build.

The contributions in this collection point to 'live' issues with policy, practice and theorisations of development, education and society in a wide range of national contexts. It is important that these voices and insights are brought into more mainstream platforms. By foregrounding these emerging voices, the collection seeks to broaden the dialogue on education and development, highlighting the importance of localised inquiry in shaping global understanding. We hope that readers, whether scholars, practitioners, or policymakers, will find in these pages both inspiration and provocation to rethink the ways in which educational systems are studied, critiqued, and transformed.

Dr. Namse Udosen
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List of Abstracts

1. LGBTQIA+ Student Experiences in South Korean Secondary Schools: The Exclusion within Seong Education

MinSoo Kim (Minsookim917@gmail.com)

Abstract

This study explores the exclusion of LGBTQIA+ identities within Seong Education (SE) in South Korean secondary schools and its implications for students' educational experiences. Informed by the theoretical frameworks of Foucault, Butler, and Apple, the research combines semi-structured interviews with policy and curriculum analysis to examine how both the formal SE framework and the hidden curriculum reinforce cis-heteronormative norms. The findings reveal a significant gap between policy rhetoric and classroom realities: SE remains inconsistently implemented, shaped by teacher discretion, and devoid of inclusive representations of diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities (SOGI). Consequently, LGBTQIA+ students experience marginalisation, invisibility, and discriminatory attitudes within SE and the wider school environment. Yet participants also demonstrated agency and resilience in seeking alternative spaces for affirmation. The study underscores the need for inclusive educational reforms that integrate SOGI diversity and align with UNESCO's Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: sex education; LGBTQIA+ exclusion; cisnormativity and heteronormativity; hidden curriculum studies; gender and education policy

CIE Research Theme: Coloniality and Education: Gender Race and Difference

2. Parallel Schooling and Myanmar Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals

Sa Phyo Arkar Myo Hlaing* (rlay19121996@gmail.com)

Abstract

This dissertation investigates why and how teachers engage in political activism, focusing on Myanmar educators' establishment of parallel schooling following the 2021 coup d'état. It aims to understand their reconceptualisation of mainstream education and their rationale for establishing a parallel education system as a form of resistance against authoritarianism. Utilising a qualitative approach, the study draws on evidence from one semi-structured group interview, eight semi-structured individual interviews and an observation. The investigation is initially framed through Giroux's writing on transformative educators. The framework was then contextualised with the ideas of 'sayar,' Dhamma and Adhamma in line with 'Myanmar as Method'. The findings suggest that educators' reflective labour, their praxis of turning reflection into action, and their futuristic imagination enable the emergence and institutionalisation of parallel schooling. While their reflection is largely motivated by the traditional ideas of 'sayar', Dhamma and Adhamma, they can turn this reflection into the action of parallel schooling due to their learning from struggles, coordination among the support groups and the wider political context. Furthermore, they consider parallel schools as their struggle for the future. All these reflections, actions and imaginations collectively explain Myanmar educators' engagement in political activism.

Keywords: Parallel schooling; transformative educators; teachers' activism; Myanmar

CIE Research Theme: Education, Conflict and Displacement

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3. Autonomy, Hysteresis, and Symbolic Resistance: The Sub-field Logic of Chinese International Students at a UK University

Samuel Douglas Wilson (samuel88wilson@gmail.com)

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the social experiences, spaces, and practices of Chinese international students at University of Sussex. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical arsenal, it examines how hysteresis between students' native habitus and university field doxa produces marginalization, prompting the formation of an autonomous sub-field distinct from the broader university field. Through thematic analysis of qualitative interviews, the study reveals the sub-field's internal logic, which offers students a collective refuge where their cultural capitals are legitimated and symbolic violence is actively resisted. Guided by Bourdieu's metatheory of metanoia, the research incorporates a recursive reflexive analysis of the researcher's positionality, illuminating complicity in the very structures under scrutiny. This study deepens understanding of the adversities Chinese international students face in Western universities while proposing new applications of Bourdieusian sociological praxis to questions of decoloniality and subaltern resistance in higher education.

Keywords: Bourdieu; field autonomy; symbolic violence; Chinese international students; UK higher education

CIE Research Theme: Critical Higher Education

4. Experiences of East Asian students in Citizenship Education in Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

Motivated by my Canadian education experience, and my self-recognition as an East Asian individual, this paper investigates the experiences of East Asian students in citizenship education in Ontario, Canada. First, I engaged with secondary sources, which discusses about Ontario's citizenship education and East-Asian racism in Canada. Then, I conducted online semi-structured interviews with 4 East-Asian background students to listen to their experiences in Ontario's citizenship education. By engaging with Honneth's recognition theory, this dissertation explores the main question; How do East Asian background students negotiate with their belongingness to Canada and their ethnicity/home country in citizenship education?, followed by two related sub-questions; (1) What influence did citizenship education have on the feelings of exclusion of East Asian background students in secondary school? and (2) How can Ontario's citizenship curriculum be revised to make East Asian students feel recognized?

Keywords: multicultural, inclusion, citizenship, identity, East Asian

CIE Research Theme: Coloniality and Education: Gender Race and Difference

5. 'They might be questioning, but we don't have to question them too': Stakeholder Perspectives of Navigating Governmental Trans Guidance

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Abstract

Global discourse increasingly constructs trans people as threats within toxic moral debates shaped by religion, culture, media, and politics. Amid growing visibility of trans children, school leaders in England face uncertainty in navigating inclusion, particularly as proposed government policy frames trans children as "gender-questioning" and in need of protection. This study explores the factors influencing leadership responses to the proposed gender-identity guidance through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed two interconnected themes: first, pervasive cis(hetero)normativity, where the assumed cisgender norm shapes understandings and acceptance of trans identities; and second, institutional power and control, whereby biopolitical mechanisms regulate trans bodies, echoing the exclusionary effects of Section 28. Findings illustrate how school leaders occupy precarious positions within competing expectations of compliance and care. The research calls for renewed gender ontologies and the redistribution of power to enable schools to become emancipatory spaces affirming diverse identities.

Keywords: education; leadership; LGBTQIA+; policy; transgender

CIE Research Theme: Global Education Policy and the Politics of Governance

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6. Participatory Needs Assessment for Education in Emergencies: A Case Study of Cabo Delgado

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Abstract

This study examines the application of participatory theory in educational needs assessments for education in emergencies (EiE) in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. Employing a qualitative case study, it draws on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to explore existing assessment practices and the degree of participation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in developing and implementing these educational assessments for education in emergencies. The findings reveal limited participation of IDPs and the absence of culturally responsive mechanisms. The research proposes a participatory framework that integrates local knowledge, addresses linguistic barriers, and promotes active engagement of IDPs. Such an approach enhances the relevance, ownership, inclusiveness, and sustainability of education interventions in crisis-affected contexts while giving decision-making power to the affected communities. By situating Cabo Delgado within wider debates on EiE, the study offers practical insights for policymakers, humanitarian actors, and educators seeking to design and implement contextually grounded and participatory responses.

Keywords: participatory theory; education in emergencies (EiE); internally displaced persons (IDPs); Cabo Delgado; needs assessment

CIE Research Theme: Education, Conflict and Displacement

7. Nigerian Students' Perceptions of Safeguarding Policies Against Child Sexual Abuse: Gaps, Power Dynamics, and Cultural Barriers in Secondary Schools

Imisiayo Oloyede (ayotimisi@gmail.com)

Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of Nigerian students in the UK regarding the effectiveness of existing safeguarding policies against child sexual abuse (CSA) in Nigerian secondary schools. Through a qualitative research approach, a semi-structured focus group was conducted with six participants who shared their experiences and perspectives on the implementation, enforcement, and gaps within child protection policies in Nigerian schools. This research is grounded in Foucault's Theory of Power, which explores how authority and control are maintained within institutions, and Feminist Theory, which examines the gendered power dynamics that perpetuate the silence surrounding sexual abuse, especially in patriarchal societies. The thematic analysis showed four main points: (1) the inadequate enforcement of safeguarding policies across different types of schools, with public schools being particularly vulnerable due to limited resources; (2) the significant influence of teacher-student power dynamics, where the fear of retaliation and lack of safe reporting mechanisms contribute to the persistence of abuse; (3) the role of cultural norms in silencing victims, as discussing sexual matters remains a taboo in Nigerian society; and (4) the participants' recommendations for more realistic and culturally sensitive policies, alongside the introduction of comprehensive sex education and improved teacher accountability.

The findings emphasise the systemic gaps in policy enforcement and the deep-rooted cultural barriers that hinder the effectiveness of existing child protection measures. The study concludes with recommendations for a more inclusive approach to policy creation, one that involves local stakeholders and addresses the specific needs of vulnerable students. By highlighting these issues, this research contributes to the broader discourse on child protection in Nigerian schools and offers insights into how international frameworks can be adapted to local contexts for more effective safeguarding.

Key themes from the analysis, supported by relevant literature, underscore the need for systemic reform to protect vulnerable students and ensure a safer educational environment in Nigerian secondary schools.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, child protection policy, student perceptions, power dynamics, cultural barriers, safeguarding policies

CIE Research Theme: Coloniality and Education: Gender, Race and Difference

8. From Inequality to Opportunity: Understanding Socio-Economic Barriers to School Completion in The Gambia through the Capability Approach

Debora-Paula Szekrenyes (debbie.szekrenyes@gmail.com)

Abstract

This study examines how socio-economic factors affect school completion rates in The Gambia, using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA) as a theoretical framework. It identifies how variables such as wealth, region, gender, and location influence individuals' opportunities to complete education. The study used a quantitative approach to analyse socio-economic barriers impacting completion, using data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2019–2020. Findings show that individuals from wealthier households and urban areas exhibited higher completion rates, while students from rural regions faced greater obstacles. The CA framed the findings, exploring how socio-economic autonomies limit capabilities to achieve outcomes. Policy recommendations include expanding Cash Transfer (CT) programmes, improving rural infrastructure, and promoting gender-sensitive initiatives. The study contributes to understanding how socio-economic factors influence education in The Gambia and calls for holistic policies addressing financial deprivation and empowering individuals to achieve educational aspirations.

Keywords: completion rates, educational outcomes, equality, capability approach, logistic regression

CIE Research Theme: Just Learning

9. Materials of Masculinity: Vanguards of Coloniality in Pakistan's Educational Governance

Ali Aftab Ghias (ali.aftab.ghias@gmail.com)

Abstract

Colonising South Asia irrevocably altered the destiny of Pakistan. Amongst the plethora of political, economic, cultural and social consequences there also lies evidence of a deeper framework that enabled colonisation. This coloniality, discussed at length by post-colonial scholars, continues to reproduce itself at global and national scales. When Pakistan is viewed through the lens of coloniality there seems to emerge a recurring cultivation of a specific type of masculinity. This masculinity seems to draw from ideas of extractive governance and hegemonic patriarchal structures. By engaging deeply with theories of coloniality, gender, and identity we begin to see how practices of education in Pakistan promote a form of Foucauldian self-subjugation; akin to the strategies of the British Raj. Masculinity becomes a performance of regulated governance, under which identity becomes synonymous with nationhood, gaining sharpness as it is pitted against 'othered' adversaries.

Keywords: identity; coloniality; masculinity; education; Pakistan

CIE Research Theme: Coloniality and Education: Gender Race and Difference

10. From the margins to the centre: Challenges and (urgent) opportunities for the educational sector in Disaster Risk Management in Brazil

Ana Cecília Alcântara Vera (ceciliaalcvera@gmail.com)

Abstract

Children and youth are highly vulnerable to socio-natural disasters, which intensify existing inequalities in regions already marked by poverty, food insecurity, and violence. Globally, 175 million children are affected each year, and disasters are increasingly understood not as "natural" events but as outcomes of socio-political processes that shape vulnerabilities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, over two million school-aged children are affected annually, and in Brazil more than 2,440 schools are located in high-risk areas, most serving the country's most vulnerable populations. Drawing on interviews with ten key stakeholders and analysis of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) 2022–2030, this qualitative study examines the role of the education sector in Disaster Risk Management (DRM). Findings show that disaster preparedness remains weakly integrated into educational agenda-setting and that the sector remains marginalised within federal DRM efforts. The study proposes mechanisms to strengthen Brazil's capacity for equitable and sustainable disaster response.

Keywords: Disaster Risk Management; Disaster Preparedness; Educational agenda-setting; CSSF; Brazil.

CIE Research Theme: Education for Planetary Justice.

11. Forced Migration and Access to Higher Education in Japan: The Case of Burmese Youths

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Abstract

Refugee youths pursuing higher education face numerous challenges, including language acquisition, cultural adaptation, financial strain, and complex immigration procedures. This qualitative study explores the experiences of four Burmese youths in Japan's higher education system, focusing on their academic and social integration. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically using the Capability Approach(CA). Findings indicate that participants encountered barriers such as language difficulties, financial burdens, administrative hurdles, and occasional discrimination. Nonetheless, universities provided supportive spaces where students developed skills, built social connections, and envisioned future careers. Professors and peers played key roles in fostering inclusion. By highlighting both challenges and enabling factors, this study contributes to research on refugee education and integration in host societies, offering insights to improve institutional support for refugee students in Japan's higher education context.

Keywords: refugee education; higher education; Burmese youths; integration; Capability Approach

CIE Research Theme: Critical Higher Education

12. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: The Shifting Role of Teachers in Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda.

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Abstract

Northern Uganda, which suffered from 20 years of armed conflict, remains fragile as the underlying causes of the conflict persist. The region transitioned linearly from a militarised reaction to the war to humanitarian assistance and development attempts. However, the structural disparities that set this course in action persisted across all these responses. Now, efforts are organised around the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus. In this study, I investigated how teachers in Northern Uganda manage their peacebuilding duties within the HDP nexus. Through interviews with teachers and analysis of documents, I demonstrate that teachers' voices are generally under-represented in the peacebuilding discourse formed by the HDP nexus. This marginalisation contributes to existing disparities in Northern Uganda. Despite the limited institutional support and the challenge of reconciling academic and peacebuilding commitments within the HDP nexus, teachers go above and beyond their formal roles to lead peacebuilding efforts within their schools and local communities.

Keywords: education, peacebuilding, conflict, teachers, development

CIE Research Theme: Education, Conflict and Displacement