

## Book review

**Comparative and International Research in Education: Globalisation, Context and Difference**, Michael Crossley and Keith Watson, *London: Routledge Falmer, 2003. ISBN 0-415-19122-X*

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This book is a major contribution to the field of comparative and international education, and will be welcomed by theorists and researchers in education and the social sciences as well as by teachers, policy makers and anyone committed to improving understanding across cultures. It has been co-authored by two distinguished academics who integrate insights from an impressive range of literature and draw on the latest research to give a comprehensive overview of recent developments and emerging trends in the field. The authors give an informative historical summary of key developments, and conclude that while the twin fields of comparative and international education have different roots, origins and purposes, they also have a great deal in common. The evolution of this multidisciplinary field of enquiry demonstrates its responsiveness to advances in disciplinary and paradigmatic thinking, as well as to changing geopolitical relations.

Comparative and international research in education is in a period of transformation. This is a result of advances in the processes of globalisation, major advances in ICT, and a rich variety of poststructuralist challenges to the nature of much social and educational research. The authors critically explore the current and future potential of such research in education, and contend that a thorough reconceptualisation of the field has distinct theoretical, methodological, substantive and organisational implications. Central to this is a need to bridge the diversity of cultures and traditions more effectively, recognising the creative strengths of different perspectives, and the authors make a coherent case for greater sensitivity to culture and context in educational research. They argue powerfully for respect for cultural and intellectual diversity allied to the bridging of cultures and traditions, professional, disciplinary, intellectual, paradigmatic, human and regional.[sense?] There is also a need for attention to political factors and to power differentials in international efforts to promote new forms of partnerships.

The book offers a well-informed analysis of the uncritical transfer of educational theory, policy and practice, and the authors highlight the need for increased attention to different cultural perspectives on policy priorities, to reflexivity and sustainability. Their analysis suggests that well-grounded theorising can make a significant contribution to the collective understanding of problems, and they make the case for improved dialogue and a strengthening of the relationship between theory and practice as the way forward in improving educational policy and practice. They argue for a clearer future vision of the diverse field of comparative and international research in education within which different paradigms and cultural perspectives can creatively co-exist. Their perspective is that diversity within the field promotes vigour and encourages debate, and they highlight the importance of the growth of international dialogue in the last few decades.

The book is informed, carefully researched and well written, offers perceptive insights and analysis, and is a scholarly contribution to the field. It succeeds in bringing together very many insights in a challenging and illuminating way, and probes key factors and influences which have been significant in shaping comparative and international research in education.