

# Special Section on Teachers, Teaching, and Globalization

## Introduction

TORRE BERNT SORENSEN AND XAVIER DUMAY

Recent decades have seen a surge in the research literature concerning teachers and teaching in comparative, international, and global contexts. *Comparative Education Review* has been one of the main publication venues for this burgeoning scholarship, and we are very pleased to present this special section in the pages of this journal.

The section comprises three articles and a final commentary. It is the result of extensive collaboration, initiated with a symposium at the European Conference of Educational Research (ECER) in Bolzano in September 2018. While the four contributions to the special section might be read on their own, they complement each other in the way that they reflect our common commitment to theoretical inquiry in taking stock of the research field and looking ahead.

Our objective with this special section is to encourage debate and deeper theoretical engagement with the dynamics between teachers, education, and globalization. The entry point is that globalization matters when making sense of the contemporary governance and educational work of teachers. While existing scholarship has demonstrated the multiple facets and implications of this fundamental point, the special section is distinctive in the way that it engages critically and constructively with theoretical approaches evident in the relevant literature, as well as the possibilities for theoretical pluralism and synthesis.

The foundation for the special section is our article “The Teaching Professions and Globalization: A Scoping Review of the Anglophone Research Literature.” Informed by existing reviews of globalization, teachers, and education, the article identifies key topics and main theoretical approaches in research literature published from the 1990s to 2018. Based on these findings, the article discusses the distinctive contributions, relative emphases, and blind spots associated with the main globalization theories. In addition, the article highlights points of consensus across theoretical approaches and the emerging trend of theoretical pluralism, but also the widespread tendency to neglect the concept of globalization in the literature about teachers and teaching in international and comparative contexts.

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In the subsequent article “Teachers in Neo-institutional and World Culture Theory,” Gerald LeTendre discusses the evolution of one of the main theoretical approaches in the existing scholarship. LeTendre demonstrates how efforts to grapple with the lived experience of teachers have increased the theoretical complexity of studies drawing on world culture theory. In doing so, he calls for refining a theory of cultural diffusion that incorporates power differentials among nations and organizations in a world system the stability of which cannot be taken for granted.

Katharine Burn and Ian Menter explore in their article “Making Sense of Teacher Education in a Globalizing World: The Distinctive Contribution of a Sociocultural Approach” the epistemic gains of sociocultural approaches. Burn and Menter argue that sociocultural approaches, in illuminating the dynamic relationships between individuals’ social situations and their wider contexts, transcend many of the rigid dualities (for instance, global/local, micro/macro, and material/immaterial) present in many analyses of globalization. The contribution of their article is highlighted by the fact that it exemplifies the potentials of theoretical pluralism while providing a nuanced analysis of teachers’ learning, a topic that our scoping review singles out as being increasingly prominent in the literature yet regrettably undertheorized in terms of globalization.

Finally, Antoni Verger in “Teachers and the Teaching Profession in Global Education Policy: Toward New Theoretical Directions” reflects on the meanings and implications of theorizing globalization. Verger suggests that existing theories continue to provide useful resources, yet there is room for further theoretical cross-fertilization to deepen the analysis of the complexities of teachers and teaching as a field of practice subject to multiple and sometimes contradictory influences. In this respect, he calls for further exploring the notions of recontextualization and forms of professionalism in making sense of the governance and educational work of teachers in the context of globalization.