

## The Convergence of Epistemologies: International Scholars and the Discourse Of International Scholarship

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[The World's Education Journal by CISC \(WEJC\)](#) is a peer-reviewed academic journal initiated and managed by the [CEHD International Student Community \(CISC\)](#). WEJC publishes manuscripts in education across all disciplines offered at the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development.

# The Convergence of Epistemologies: International Scholars and the Discourse of International Scholarship

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## Abstract

### English Version

The inaugural volume of the *World's Education Journal* by *CEHD International Student Community (WEJC)* is grounded in the metaphor of a river, where multiple epistemological currents converge without erasing their origins. Drawing on the metaphor of a river, this volume brings together scholars whose intellectual trajectories converge across disciplines, geographies, and epistemological traditions. Like rivers entering from different points, contributors engage shared currents of inquiry while remaining grounded in distinct cultural, historical, and scholarly lineages. Situated within a critique of Western-centric knowledge production systems and academic capitalism, the editorial piece interrogates how epistemological commodification enables institutions to benefit from global intellectual labor while retaining ownership and authority over knowledge. This issue centers on the intellectual contributions of international students as cross-cultural and cross-epistemological knowledge producers. Acknowledging international scholar status as both temporary and structurally essential to contemporary higher education, the three editors—each affiliated with CIDE and identifying as international scholars—position this journal itself as a co-created project born from shared precarity, mobility, and scholarly collaboration.

**Khmer (ខ្មែរ) Version**

ទិវានុប្បវត្តិស្រាវជ្រាវសិក្សា *World's Education Journal by CISC (WEJC)* លេខដំបូងប្រើពាក្យ ប្រៀបធៀប «ទន្លេនៃចំណេះដឹង» ជាជាតំនិតខុសគ្នា ដើម្បីបង្កើតជាកន្លែងដែលចរន្តចំណេះដឹងជាច្រើនបញ្ចូល គ្នាដោយមិនលុបប្រភពដើម។ ដើម្បីប្រមូលផ្តុំអ្នកប្រាជ្ញ ដែលមានគន្លង បញ្ញាបញ្ចូលគ្នាឆ្លងកាត់មុខវិជ្ជា ភូមិសាស្ត្រ និងប្រពៃណីចំណេះដឹង សៀវភៅនេះប្រើប្រាស់ពាក្យ «ទន្លេ» ជាតំនិតខុសគ្នាដែលអញ្ជើញ អ្នករួមចំណែកចូលរួម ឆ្លើយសំណួរដែល ប្រឆាំងការរើសអើងចំណេះដឹងនិងការរិះគន់ប្រកបដោយស្ថាបនា ទៅលើការអប់រំដែលផ្តោតតែ លើមនោគមវិជ្ជាលោកខាងលិច និងការធ្វើអាជីវកម្មលើវិស័យសិក្សា។ អត្ថបទនេះរិះគន់ស្ថាប័នអប់រំដែលយកតំនិត បញ្ញវន្តអន្តរជាតិទៅរកលុយ និងគ្រប់គ្រងតាមចិត្ត ចំណែកឯម្ចាស់ចំណេះដឹងវិញមិនសូវមានសិទ្ធិសម្រេចអ្វីឡើយ។ បញ្ហានេះផ្តោតលើការចូលរួមចំណែកបញ្ញា របស់និស្សិតអន្តរជាតិជាអ្នកផលិតចំណេះដឹងឆ្លងវប្បធម៌ និងឆ្លង ចំណេះដឹង។ អ្នកកែសម្រួលទាំងបីនាក់ ដែលសុទ្ធតែជាអ្នកចេះដឹងមកពីក្រៅប្រទេសដែរនោះ យល់ថាវត្តមានរបស់ និស្សិតអន្តរជាតិគឺពិតជាសំខាន់សម្រាប់សាកលវិទ្យាល័យសម័យថ្មី។ ពួកគេបានបង្កើតទស្សនាវដ្តីនេះឡើង ដើម្បី បង្ហាញពីលទ្ធផលនៃការធ្វើការរួមគ្នា ការផ្លាស់ប្តូរទីកន្លែង និងការតស៊ូក្នុងវិស័យអប់រំ។

**Chinese Version**

由教育与人类发展学院 (CEHD) 国际学生团体创办的《世界教育期刊》(*World's Education Journal*——*WEJC*) 首卷, 立足于“河流”这一隐喻, 本卷汇聚了来自不同学科、地域及认识论传统的学者的论文。跻身于同一条学术河流, 虽切入点不同, 但是他们扎根于自身独特的文化、历史与学术传承。本卷的主编们立足于对西方中心主义, 知识生产体系及学术资本主义的批判, 在本文中剖析“认识论商品化”这一概念, 解释各类机构如何既从全球智力劳动中获利, 又同时牢牢把控着对知识的所有权与权威这一现象。本期期刊致力于聚焦并突出国际学者作为跨文化、跨认识论的知识生产者所做出的贡献。三位主编均来自比较和国际发展教育项目 (CIDE), 且为“国际学者”; 他们深刻认识到, 国际学者的身份虽有时效性, 却对当代高等教育体系有着结构性的重要意义。基于这一认知, 国际学者们通过共同经历的危机、跨地域流动, 以及彼此间的学术共创, 孕育了这卷期刊。

**Key words**

Epistemological convergence, Knowledge production, Internationalization of higher education, International scholar



## THE CONVERGENCE OF EPISTEMOLOGIES

### Introduction

The inaugural volume of the *World's Education Journal by the CEHD International Student Community (WEJC)* is a direct response to the critical need for accountability regarding epistemological diversity within education and human development research. This journal, grounded in the metaphor of a river where multiple epistemological currents converge without erasing their origins, centers on the intellectual contributions of international students as crucial cross-cultural and cross-epistemological knowledge producers.

This editorial and volume bring together international scholars—defined as knowledge producers actively committed to their craft—whose intellectual trajectories span various disciplines, geographies, and scholarly traditions. Contributors engage shared currents of inquiry while remaining grounded in their distinct cultural, historical, and scholarly lineages. Situated within a robust critique of Western-centric knowledge production systems and academic capitalism, this work interrogates how epistemological commodification benefits institutions from global intellectual labor while retaining ownership and authority over knowledge. By positioning the journal as a co-created project born from shared precarity, mobility, and scholarly collaboration, WEJC seeks to highlight the essential and unique epistemological insights international students bring to the contemporary landscape of higher education.

### Journey to Knowledge Co-Creation

International students, *or dare we say, “scholars,”* have long played a critical role in the co-creation of knowledge within the global (or internationalized) higher education discourse, yet this participation is often shaped by uneven epistemic terrains that privilege Western-centric ideology. As Altbach and Knight (2007) note, internationalization is deeply entangled with global power structures. This further situates these dynamics within a competitive knowledge

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economy that stratifies knowledge, and for international students, this means navigating processes of epistemic translation and negotiation within systems that both enable mobility and constrain legitimacy (Anderson, 2020; Marginson, 2010).

Higher education thus functions simultaneously as an enabler and a gatekeeper of knowledge production, where access to dominant academic platforms is mediated by linguistic norms, disciplinary conventions, and institutional prestige (Pennycook, 2022; Stein, 2021). These dynamics reflect broader structures of coloniality (Quijano, 2024) and epistemic injustice, in which marginalized knowledge must (or is asked to) conform to dominant frameworks to be recognized (Boni & Velasco, 2020). Consequently, knowledge produced by international students and scholars in independent spaces is often treated as peripheral or “indie,” while similar work gains legitimacy when published in commodified, high-status academic journals, revealing how academic capitalism and institutional validation shape not only what knowledge circulates but also whose knowledge endures.

### **Navigating Western-Centric Knowledge Systems and Epistemic Power**

The journey of international scholars in knowledge creation is deeply entangled with Western-centric systems of knowledge production, where higher education operates as one of the most powerful institutional “wheels” shaping what counts as legitimate knowledge. Although global discourses increasingly position education as a common good, this ideal is often reconfigured into a transactional social contract grounded in neoliberalism, human capital, and market logic (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010).

*“As I reflect, as a Cambodian scholar educated within systems where even writing in ខ្មែរ (Khmer) was often rendered invisible or incompatible with ‘ទាន់សម័យ (modern)’ academic infrastructures, my early relationship to ចំណេះដឹង (knowledge) was shaped through English and French as dominant epistemic languages. Within these*



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*Western-centric frameworks, ចំណេះដឹងទាន់សម័យ (modern knowledge) appeared not as something I could author, but as something I was expected to receive, translate, and reproduce.” - Editor in Chief, Hingphith, V.*

If the symbol above (or the Khmer alphabet) appears to your readers or viewers as block cubes, it is a reminder that, within this complex education system, knowledge is not neutral but produced and regulated through discursive regimes that determine what is valid, visible, and citable (Foucault, 1982). These regimes are inseparable from the enduring structures of coloniality, where epistemic hierarchies privilege Western frameworks while marginalizing alternative ontologies and epistemologies (Quijano, 2024; Said, 2014). Language—particularly English—further consolidates this dominance, operating as both a medium and a filter through which knowledge must pass to gain legitimacy (Pennycook, 2022; Mair, 2003).

Epistemological development is constrained, forcing scholars to align intellectual traditions with dominant paradigms, making growth uneven. Non-Western knowledge is often translated, reshaped, or silenced to gain recognition in global academia. This structure links to the commodification of scholarship, embedding knowledge production within transactional metrics of value and prestige (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010). Higher education operates in a global knowledge economy, favoring market-oriented outputs and academic capitalism. International scholars and students are both learners and producers of commodifiable knowledge, contributing intellectual labor to institutional metrics. Vavrus and Pekol (2015) argue that English functions as the language of academic neocolonialism because scholars globally feel compelled to adhere to the standards and ideologies of the dominant academic systems that utilize English (p. 18).

However, their epistemic value is mediated by publication norms and linguistic standards. This paradox means international scholars shape knowledge while navigating systems that



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appropriate and legitimize their work through institutional ownership. Scholarship thus becomes both a development and a commodity, reinforcing a transactional model in which the value of knowledge is tied to its production and recognition structures.

### **Structural Challenges in Knowledge Production Systems**

As the university is the site where international students acquire, produce, and circulate knowledge, it is important for us to remind ourselves that knowledge production is never neutral (Spangler, 2025). The current site of the American university is not only a colonial institution but also a site to produce colonial knowledge (Stein, 2022). The current knowledge production system is rooted in a hegemonic, Eurocentric, colonial structure (Quijano, 2024), which has been produced and reproduced for more than 500 years since the beginning of European colonization (Said, 1979).

*“Instead of simply categorizing international students as victims, villains or victors, it is important to understand that we are all entangled with coloniality through our own positionality. However, as we constantly reflect on our own relationship with coloniality, we might be able to create alternative knowledge which is beyond the Eurocentric colonial knowledge production system.”* - Co-Editor, Cong, Q.

Therefore, the goal of this journal is to challenge the Eurocentric colonial structure of the knowledge production system, where we, among many other scholars (Spangler, 2025; Stein, 2022; Said, 1979), collectively ask who is making the knowledge, what knowledge can be legitimized, and for whom we are creating knowledge. This journal will be a collective stance among international scholars that, rather than being marginalized by the system, we re-center ourselves as sites of knowledge production. At the same time, as emerging scholars ourselves, we would like to resist the academic value of individualism and competition. We believe that



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only by building a community and a different type of relationality with knowledge collectively can we move towards a decolonial way of knowledge production.

### **Epistemic Challenges in Recognizing Student-Led Scholarship as Legitimate Knowledge**

Students as scholars, production as a challenge to the dominant distribution and production of knowledge.

*“We, as students, specifically, as international students, do we or can we really say what we need to say just to be accepted as part of the formal knowledge production. Our positionality is already at a disadvantage, just by adding and acknowledging this temporary status.”* - Co-Editor, Peng, B.

If the colloquium creates a space for knowledge to be voiced, WEJC asks a more difficult question: who is permitted to turn such knowledge into recognized scholarship? As a peer-reviewed, open-access journal initiated and managed by the *CEHD International Student Community*, WEJC inhabits a productive tension. It is at once close to the institutional margins, being grassroots shaped by the energies and constraints of international student life, and yet unmistakably oriented toward the formal circuits of scholarly production. The journal’s mission makes this dual position visible. It presents itself not only as a publication but as a movement committed to elevating the voices, experiences, and intellectual contributions of international graduate students, while also aspiring to become work that is read and cited in broader academic conversations. In this sense, the journal does not reject mainstream knowledge production but challenges the assumption that knowledge must always originate from established epistemic centers.

This is where the journal’s “indie” quality becomes significant. Its distinctiveness lies not simply in being international student-led, but in the ways in which it massages its values and messages into norms of knowledge production and distribution. WEJC explicitly welcomes

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diverse forms of knowledge. That openness matters because it widens the terms on which scholarship can appear, especially for international students whose insights are often shaped by movement across languages, institutions, and educational systems. For those in temporary or structurally disadvantaged positions, the challenge is rarely only whether they have something meaningful to say. It is also whether what they need to say can be expressed in forms that formal academia is prepared to recognize. By creating a rigorous and supportive publishing space, WEJC directly addresses that problem. It makes room for forms of knowledge that may otherwise remain undervalued, mis-translated, or excluded from dominant scholarly venues.

Seen this way, a grassroots international student-run journal is not a lesser version of formal scholarship. It challenges the hierarchy through which scholarship is usually authorized. WEJC's partnership with the University of Minnesota Libraries and its commitment to peer review underscore that this is not a withdrawal from rigor, but a rethinking of where rigor can reside and who gets to enact it.

### **Intellectual Contribution of International Scholars**

International scholars' intellectual labor is often filtered through systems—such as publication regimes, disciplinary gatekeeping, and institutional valuations—that privilege commodified scholarship (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010). Even inclusive internationalization is often embedded in structures that regulate whose knowledge is deemed authoritative. This colloquium and journal intervene to resist the narrow institutionalization of knowledge production and reframe the value of international scholars' contributions.

### **Resisting Through Co-Creation: Reimagining Knowledge Production**

Rather than functioning as supplementary or peripheral platforms, this initiative positions co-creation and reflexivity as methodological and political practices for reclaiming epistemic

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agency. Co-creation, in this sense, is not simply collaborative production, but a refusal of unilateral epistemic authority, enabling international scholars to actively shape the terms through which knowledge is generated and validated. Reflexivity, as both method and stance, further disrupts fixed epistemic hierarchies by making visible the positional, linguistic, and institutional conditions under which knowledge is produced (Holmes, 2020; Dahinden et al., 2021). Together, these practices align with critical traditions that emphasize the need to unsettle dominant knowledge systems rather than merely diversify them (Stein, 2022; Andreotti, 2011).

This colloquium and journal, therefore, function as epistemic spaces of re-signification, where international scholars are recognized not as peripheral actors within existing systems, but as co-constructors of knowledge in their own right. In doing so, they foreground the often-invisible intellectual labor of international scholars and challenge the assumption that scholarly legitimacy is exclusively mediated through institutional publication regimes. Ultimately, this initiative reclaims knowledge production as a relational, situated, and contested process—one in which co-creation becomes both a method of inquiry and a form of epistemic resistance.

### **Resisting Through Acknowledgment: International Students and Scholars in Education and Human Development Research**

International scholars are playing an increasingly crucial and productive role in education and human development research. This prominence reflects a shift in the field, which now recognizes these researchers as active knowledge producers rather than simply recipients of established ideas. The University of Minnesota, which hosts this journal, has its own complicated history with international scholars. *The CEHD International Student Community (CISC)* emerged from a growing need to address both the social well-being and the systemic presence of

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international scholar communities whose perspectives (epistemological standpoints) were often challenged, commodified, commercialized, intentionally overlooked, or struggling to find a platform for visibility. *This is an invitation to co-create a space where diverse epistemological standpoints can flourish.*

This epistemological shift challenges the assumption that knowledge primarily flows from the West, highlighting knowledge creation as relational and contested across borders. As Foucault (1982) suggests, knowledge is produced within discourse regimes, which international scholars actively negotiate and reshape through their research. Thus, education and human development research becomes a site where epistemologies are continuously reconstructed through mobility and transnational engagement.

International scholars contribute more than data; they offer alternative epistemological origins that challenge dominant Western frameworks in theory, methodology, and validation. Their work stems from multilingual, multicultural, and transdisciplinary systems, expanding what counts as rigorous inquiry. However, these contributions are constrained by institutional and publication hierarchies that favor certain epistemic traditions (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010).

Crucially, international scholars are not just situated within existing knowledge systems but are actively reconfiguring them through co-constructed, reflexive, and contextually grounded practices. This represents a shift in educational research from knowledge consumption to knowledge co-production, decentralizing epistemic authority across diverse scholarly positionalities.



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### **Epistemic Co-Creation in the Colloquium on the World's Education System Series**

The Colloquium on the World's Education Systems Series has, from its inception, aspired to be more than an event. It has been shaped as a space where knowledge is not merely presented but co-created through comparative conversation, the encounter of different educational histories and philosophies, and the intellectual labor of international students whose perspectives often emerge from crossing systems rather than inhabiting only one. The series's architecture makes this ambition visible. All elements of the Colloquium suggest a larger vision of scholarly life, one in which presentation, dialogue, community-building, and publication are not separate activities, but part of a shared ecosystem of knowledge production and circulation.

What has made the Colloquium distinctive over the past several years is a refusal to treat international students as symbolic representatives of "global diversity" alone. Instead, the series has positioned them as thinkers, interlocutors, and knowledge producers. That orientation was already explicit in the first colloquium in 2024, where one of the opening sessions centered on the role of international students in creating a diverse community and participating in knowledge co-creation. The program itself reflected that commitment, bringing together presentations across multiple national and regional contexts and inviting attendees into a comparative mode of listening and thinking. By the second colloquium in 2025, the series had further deepened this vision, signaling that the work of the colloquium was not meant to end when the presentations concluded. Oral exchange was being intentionally linked to writing, revision, and scholarly dissemination.

Seen from this vantage point, the present journal issue marks an important maturation of the colloquium's original purpose. Because it includes articles by presenters from the first and second colloquiums, it shows how those gatherings continue beyond the temporal boundaries of



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the event itself. A presentation delivered in a shared scholarly space becomes the beginning rather than the endpoint of intellectual work. Ideas are first voiced before a community, then tested through conversation, carried forward through reflection and revision, and eventually transformed into written scholarship. In this sense, the first and second colloquiums now complete a fuller cycle of knowledge production, from dialogic exchange to manuscript development, and from development to publication and circulation.

### **Epistemic Co-Creation as Converging Rivers in the World's Education Journal**

The inaugural volume of the *World's Education Journal by the CEHD International Student Community (WEJC)* is conceptually anchored in the hydrological metaphor of the river. International students develop, metaphorically, from different rivers of epistemic traditions, and here at this journal, they converge to produce intellectual synergies. Such synergy is manifested in this volume's priority on epistemic plurality over immediate coherence, viewing scholarly knowledge as intrinsically relational—produced through complex encounters across disciplinary and linguistic boundaries, and localized knowledges. Contributors are thus recognized as epistemically located scholars whose intellectual trajectories are shaped by differentiated histories, resisting the abstract knowledge-producer role.

Furthermore, situated within critical discourse on academic capitalism and intellectual commodification, this work interrogates the paradoxical global higher education system. This system depends on, yet displaces, international intellectual labor, reproducing asymmetries in knowledge ownership, validation, and circulation (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010). The "brain drain" is reframed, moving beyond demographic concern to examine the epistemological tension of knowledge continuously generated transnationally but subject to differential institutionalization and recognition.



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To address these systemic tensions, this inaugural issue centers international students' contributions as inherently cross-cultural and cross-epistemological, challenging monolithic frameworks and expanding educational inquiry. Acknowledging the temporality and structural embeddedness of international student status, the three editors—all CIDE-affiliated international scholars—conceptualize this journal as a co-created epistemic intervention. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and decolonial thought, this initiative serves as a reflexive, collaboratively structured space. Crucially, co-creation is foregrounded as an essential epistemic stance resisting premature closure of meaning and singular academic authority (Fairclough, 2000; Andreotti, 2011).

### **Summary of the Journal**

This inaugural volume of the *World's Education Journal by the CEHD International Student Community (WEJC)* interrogates how knowledge is produced, validated, and circulated in global higher education, critiquing Western-centric views and enduring colonial structures that privilege certain ways of knowing (Foucault, 1982; Quijano, 2024; Said, 2014). While internationalization is often driven by academic capitalism and global competition (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson, 2010), this journal is a co-created space foregrounding epistemological plurality, reflexivity, and relational knowledge production to disrupt these established hierarchies.

### **Knowledge in Motion: Application, Reflexivity, and Co-Creation Across Education**

The volume is structured as an open invitation to contributors from the Colloquium on the World's Education System Series, current international students and scholars, and alumni actively engaged in educational practice and research across diverse global contexts. It brings



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together empirical, systematic, and conceptual works that reflect the lived intellectual labor of international scholars working across disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

Empirical studies such as *Experience with ABA for Children with Autism in Ghana*, *Simulation to Vocation: Improving the Transition Program in a Special Education Center in the Philippines*, and *Teachers' AI Education Programs: Comparative Study of the US and South Korea* demonstrate how knowledge is contextually applied and reconstituted through practice. These works illustrate how international scholars navigate the translation of theory into localized educational realities, aligning with Anderson's (2020) emphasis on education as a site of translation across cultural and epistemic encounters.

Complementing these empirical contributions are conceptual papers that critically interrogate the epistemological foundations of educational systems. Works such as *From Colonial Medium to Local Agency: Historical Insights for Malawi's K-12 Language of Instruction Policy*, *Reading the Air: School Ethos and Teacher Identity in Japan*, *Ngano as a Method: Reclaiming African Indigenous Epistemologies in Research*, *Critical Internationalization in Chinese Universities*, and *Bridging the Silence: LGBT/Queer Asian/American Collegians and the Politics of Belonging on and off Campus, 1970s–1990s* collectively engage with questions of coloniality, identity, and institutional knowledge production. These contributions resonate with decolonial and critical perspectives that challenge dominant epistemic frameworks and call for epistemic justice in higher education (Andreotti, 2011; Boni & Velasco, 2020; Stein, 2022).

They also reflect the necessity of expanding methodological and disciplinary boundaries, aligning with calls to rethink how research questions themselves are constructed within academic systems (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).



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### **Navigating Epistemic Tensions: Internationalization, Decoloniality, and Knowledge**

#### **Production**

Across these contributions, a shared emphasis emerges on the application of knowledge as both contextually grounded and epistemologically reflexive. The studies from Ghana, the Philippines, and South Korea, in particular, demonstrate how educational knowledge is not merely transferred across contexts but actively reconstructed through situated practice, institutional negotiation, and cultural translation. Conceptual works such as *Nagano as a Method* and *Reading the Air* further extend this reflection by foregrounding indigenous and relational epistemologies as legitimate methodological frameworks, challenging the dominance of Western-centric paradigms in educational research. These engagements reflect a broader commitment to co-creation as a methodological stance, where knowledge is not simply produced about contexts but with them, through relational and reflexive scholarly engagement (Holmes, 2020; Dahinden et al., 2021).

At the same time, this volume openly engages with the tensions inherent in processes of internationalization, decolonization, and epistemological transformation. The inclusion of studies situated in China, Japan, and Malawi highlights how educational systems are simultaneously shaped by global discourses and local epistemic traditions, revealing the complex entanglement of knowledge production and institutional power. These works collectively underscore that international scholarship is not a neutral or uniform field, but one constituted through uneven relations of authority, language, and disciplinary normativity (Pennycook, 2022; Mair, 2003). In this regard, the journal does not seek to resolve these tensions but to hold space for their articulation and critical engagement.



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Ultimately, *The Convergence of Epistemologies: International Scholars and the Discourse of International Scholarship* positions this volume as an intentional act of co-creation and epistemic resistance. It affirms that international scholars are not peripheral contributors to global knowledge systems, but active epistemic agents whose intellectual labor shapes and reconfigures the field of education and human development research. By bringing together diverse methodological, linguistic, and disciplinary traditions, this journal enacts a commitment to reflexive and relational knowledge production that resists commodified academic normativities and foregrounds epistemological plurality as foundational rather than exceptional.



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