

Special Issue: East Meets West: A Comparative Investigation of Early Childhood

Guest Editor's INTRODUCTION

Jennifer Chung

University College London, IOE

A new year welcome from the Guest Editor of the Special Issue of APJRECE!

It has been a tremendous honor to guest edit this special issue of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education. I must thank the current editorial board for extending this wonderful opportunity. I chose the theme, “East Meets West: A Comparative Investigation of Early Childhood Education” for a variety of reasons. Firstly, in today’s world, the movement of people and ideas across contexts has become commonplace, as has the comparison and exchange of educational ideas between nations. It is important to view education policy, trends, and practice as it moves, as well as morphs (Cowen, 2009), across country borders. Every article in this special issue provides a lesson for early childhood education practitioners, researchers, and policy makers around the globe. I also decided on the “East Meets West” theme due to my own background and interest. I am an academic with East Asian heritage, born and raised in the West, and a research specialist of education in Finland and other Nordic countries. I have the natural tendency to view the world, and education, in a comparative manner, and believe it is beneficial to do so.

The first article in the special issue is entitled, “Evaluation and Assessment in English and South Korean Early Childhood Education: Divergent Policies and Warnings from the West to the East.” It investigates assessment and evaluation, as well as the two countries’ opposite

trajectories in early childhood education. This article frames the rest of the special issue well, by encouraging an internationally comparative lens with which to view the early childhood education field.

“Chinese Parents’ Beliefs on Children’s Outdoor Risky Play during Preschool Years,” the second article, explores Eastern parents’ views of a Western-inspired preschool practice. This qualitative study probes the tensions between parents’ own upbringing and culture with their understanding of play for children. The element of risk and changing attitudes in society also made an impact in the research. The Eastern parental belief on Western-inspired risky play is a topic to consider as Eastern education researchers continually look West, and to the Nordic countries in particular, for policy and practice inspiration.

The third article, “Teachers’ Experiences of Facilitating Play-based Learning Online for Young Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic in China Through the Lens of the TPACK Framework,” also investigates play-based learning, but this time, through the use of digital technologies during the COVID lockdowns. Interestingly, the three sample schools for this study were English, American, and International Baccalaureate schools, further contributing to the East meets West theme of this special issue.

“Integrating Western Play-Based Pedagogy with Chinese Educational Traditions: A Tale of Two Public Kindergartens,” the fourth article for this special issue, further expands on Western elements influencing East Asian early childhood education. The research carefully considers Western play-based early childhood pedagogies in Chinese public kindergartens, and views how the pedagogies navigate in Eastern, Confucian-influenced settings by creating a “third space,” hybrid, or glocalized version of play-based pedagogy.

The final article, “Protect That Child At All Costs”: How Practitioner Perception of Active Shooter Drills Affects Implementation in Early Years Settings in the United States” is especially poignant in our time of violence, war, and political unrest. While the research is drawn from Western perspectives, this paper serves as a reminder that all children across the globe, even young children within the early childhood education sector, are not immune to

Guest Editor's INTRODUCTION

the harsh realities of our world.

I hope you enjoy reading all of these articles, which provide a wide-ranging view of early childhood education in Eastern, Western, and “East Meets West” contexts. I am proud to present these articles as part of the special issue, which present a critical view of current topics, problems, challenges, and initiatives within the early childhood education sector.

I wish all readers of APJRECE a warm, happy, healthy, and peaceful 2025.

Jennifer Chung, DPhil (Oxon)
University College London
IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society

Cowen, R. (2009). The transfer, translation and transformation of educational processes: and their shape-shifting? *Comparative Education*, 45(3), 315-327.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40593178>