



Iran Laying the Capstone Brick for a BRICS Grouping of Countries: New horizons for Comparative and International Education

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 28 August 2021 Revised: 27 April 2022 Accepted: 29 January 2023 Online: 05 February 2023</p>	<p>The scholarly field of Comparative and International Education is facing one central challenge, namely that of the affirmation of the Global South to its rightful place. The thesis of this paper is that the Comparative and International Education scholarly community in the BRICS countries is ideally placed to lead this quest, and Iran joining the BRICS grouping, can strengthen this scholarly community in this endeavour. The paper discusses Northern Hegemony in the world, and places against this Northern Hegemony the rise of the Global South in the world. The range of challenges facing the scholarly field of Comparative and International Education is enumerated. It is argued in this article that the Comparative and International Education scholarly community in the BRICS countries, more so in an enlarged BRICS grouping including Iran, has a critical mass to negotiate these challenges, and especially so in securing the Global South coming to its right in Comparative and International Education.</p>
<p>KEYWORDS</p> <p>BRICS Comparative & International Education Global South Iran Northern Hegemony</p>	

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Introduction

Comparative and International Education is a field of scholarship that is displaying two diametrically opposite features at the same time. On the one hand it has been typified as an expanding field, ever testing new frontiers, an infinite field (Wolhuter & Wiseman, 2019) and has it been argued that in view of current developments in the world, it is gaining enhanced value and relevance (e.g. Powell, 2020). On the other hand it has been argued that it is a preposterous field, in the sense of fostering Northern hegemony, and that the Global South does not come to its right (e.g. see Wolhuter, Espinoza and McGinn, 2023a). The aim of this paper is to explore the significance of an enlarged BRICS grouping, that is with the inclusion of Iran, as a counter-balance in this regard, and for the future evolution of the field of Comparative and International Education.

The article commences with an overview of the current criticism of Northern Hemispheric Hegemony in Comparative and International Education. Against this preposterous structure of the field, the rise and challenge from the Global South is then pitted. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) grouping as the vanguard of the Global South is then introduced. The value that Iran's joining of BRICS can add to the value of the BRICS grouping is then explored. In conclusion the possibilities that such an enlarged BRICS groupings harbour for the future development of Comparative and International Education are assessed.

Criticism against Northern Hemispheric Hegemony in Comparative and International Education

The central node of international academy — the top and most affluent universities, the most esteemed and high impact journals, publishing houses, and most copiously funded research centres — are overwhelmingly concentrated in the Global North. Hence it is here where top scholars are located and where the research agenda get set, where gatekeepers to publishing (journals and books) are to be found, where the set rules of research ethics are laid down, and where it is being defined what “development” is and what the development trajectory of all education systems and nations will be. In recent times criticism has grown that this is to the detriment of the people and of education in the Global South, and also to the field of Comparative and International Education. Examples of this growth, in the field of Comparative and International Education in particular, include top journal Comparative Education Review volume 61 (S) May 2017 Special Edition: “Contesting Coloniality: Rethinking knowledge production and circulation in Comparative and International Education”. In Comparative and International Education — as elsewhere — it is not only allegations that research agenda, objectives, methods and theoretical frameworks in the field

promote interests and reflect perspectives of Global North, but the universal validity of claims to knowledge thus produced in field is also disputed. Even the prevailing regime of research ethics is thus criticized (*cf.* McMahon & Millighah, 2021).

The rise of and challenge from the Global South

The term “Global South” was introduced by Carl Oglesby in 1969 (Oglesby, 1969). Its exact borders are difficult to demarcate but covers roughly Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Near East, and the developing parts of Asia (i.e. it excludes the high income Asian countries, such as South Korea and Singapore). While geographically it has always represented a significant block in the world, since the mid twentieth century the Global South has become first a growing demographic force in the world, then also a growing economic and political force. Also education wise, in terms of enrolments at all levels, the Global South has assumed a towering presence.

Asia and Africa are the world’s two largest continents. Africa covers 30.37 million square kilometers. This is a large tract of land, the size not evident in the conventional Mercator projection of the world map, but North America, India and China can comfortably fit into the borders of Africa. A significant part of natural resources (fresh water, minerals, potential solar energy) of the world are located in the Global South. Demographically the Global South is assuming a growing portion of the global population. For a long time the majority of the global population have been residing in the Global South.

It is not only in terms of societal contextual segments that the stature of the Global South countries in the contemporary world is growing. The same applies to education. In terms of enrolments and numbers of teachers, the centre of gravity of the global education project has shifted to the South. Worldwide higher education student numbers now total more than 200 million. But the number of students in the Global North peaked in 2011 and has been declining since, to fall to 58.3 million in 2018. At the same time, enrollments in the Global South has almost doubled, from some 78 million in 2006 to 150 million in 2018 (MacGregor, 2022).

One of the major difficulties in conducting research about the Global South is the dearth of aggregate data. However, available UNESCO data suggest that in the case of secondary school enrollments, the majority of students are now located in the Global South too (see table 1).

Table 1 Secondary School Enrolments

Region	Enrollments 2021 (millions)
Western Europe, North America, East Asia and Asia Pacific	260.3
Arab countries, Central Asia, Latin America, South and South West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa	264.7

(Source of Data: UNESCO, 2022). (This has been calculated from UNESCO Country groupings. It should be borne in mind that these do not correspond to the borders of the Global South. China, part of the Global South, is part of East Asia in the UNESCO taxonomy).

At primary school level, the enrollment preponderance of the Global South is even more impressive (see table 2).

Table 2 Primary School Enrolments

Region	Enrollments 2021 (millions)
Western Europe, North America, East Asia and Asia Pacific	262.7
Arab countries, Central Asia, Latin America, South and South West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa	482.1

(Source of Data: UNESCO, 2022). (This has been calculated from UNESCO Country groupings. It should be borne in mind that these do not correspond to the borders of the Global South. China, part of the Global South, is part of East Asia in the UNESCO taxonomy).

BRICS as the vanguard of the Global South

BRICS is an acronym, for a grouping of countries which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was formed in 2010. By a combination of their geography, demography and increasingly also its economy, and lately also politically and socially, BRICS can be regarded as the vanguard of the Global South.

The geographic strength of the BRICS grouping, in terms of surface area covered by this collection of countries, is presented in table 3.

Table 3 Geographic Strength of the BRICS Countries: Surface Area Covered

Country	Area (Millions of square kilometres)
Brazil	8.5
Russia	17.1
India	3.2
China	9.6
South Africa	1.2
Total	29.6 (19.6% of the 148.9 million square kilometres land on earth)

Thus the BRICS countries cover almost one fifth of all land surface of earth. Russia is by far the largest country on earth, in terms of area. Further to this, the BRICS countries are richly endowed with freshwater supplies, natural forests and mineral deposits.

It's assumed that BRICS member states will be the dominant suppliers of manufactured goods, services, and raw materials by 2050. In terms of parity of purchasing power, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassed that of the United States of America in 2013 (Piketty, 2022: 230). At current rates of convergence, the per capita GDP of China will overtake that of the United States of America by 2040-2050 (Ibid.). In terms of many societal dynamics and trends, the Global South is the track layer in the world, in these respects the BRICS countries also walk in front (*cf.* Wolhuter, 2020b).

Education wise to the BRICS countries make up no small part of the education effort of the Global South, and for that part, of the world. Enrolments at different levels in the BRICS countries are presented in table 4. Total higher education enrollments in the BRICS countries come to 103.8 million (calculated from latest available figures, UNESCO, 2022).

Table 4 Enrolments in BRICS Countries (millions)

Level of Education Country	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Brazil	15.4	22.2	9.0
Russia	7.1	10.5	5.7
India	122.0	138.4	3.9
China	107.8	90.9	53.8
South Africa	7.7	51.0	1.2
Total	260.4	267.5	103.7

(Source of Data: UNESCO, 2022).

Not only in terms of quantitative weight (and growing weight at that) but also in terms of education reforms and innovations and experiments the BRICS countries have in current times as well as in history attracted the attention of the scholarly community.

Brazil is well known for the place where Paulo Freire developed and implemented his “literacy in 45 days” programme. A unique way of alphabetisation with conscientisation, it played a major role in reducing adult literacy in Brazil. Russia was held in revere for the education development after 1917 and for the unique Soviet experiment in education, with some unique, fascinating features such as polytechnic education. The reconstruction of education after 1990 in line with the total socio-political dispensation, has attracted much interest, i.e. the dimensions of decentralisation, democratisation, and privatisation (see Wolhuter, 1996). The position of English as language of learning and teaching on the one hand versus, on the other hand, the imperative to develop and to empower indigenous languages as well as the linguistic diversity in India, is of note to the Comparative Education community, i.e. in view of a recent World Bank Report on the major effect that language of learning and teaching has on learning output, equality of outcome, and the production of human capital (see World Bank, 2021).

China’s models of trilingual education, that is the accommodation of Mandarin as national language, of English as international lingua franca, and of the diversity of local languages (the Constitution of China acknowledges 55 ethnic minorities) too has attracted the attention of scholars

in the field (see Feng & Adamson, eds, 2014). China's initiatives in recent years in creating world-class universities, Project 985, Project 211 and the "Double First Class University" Scheme have been nothing less than impressive too (see Wolhuter, 2020a).

Erudite South African political commentator RW Johnson (2019) commences his recently published book *Fighting for the Dream*, with a convincing argument that its South Africa's particular societal contextual ecology elevates it to a pedestal, making it poignant for the global societal project. Post-1994 South Africa education, as a particular sub-system of that contextual ecology has been typified by Wolhuter (2021b) as "The South African education system: Poignancy in the global education project and in domestic societal reconstruction".

Iran adding value to BRICS

The envisioned joining to Iran to the BRICS grouping can add significant value to BRICS, in terms of (but by no means limited to):

- Geographic weight
- Demographic weight
- Economic weight
- Education project.

The value that Iran can add to the BRICS grouping, in terms of geographic, demographic and economic strength, is presented in table 5.

Table 5. The Value that Iran can add to the BRICS Grouping

	BRICS	+Iran
Geography: Area mill sq km	29.6	1.6
Demography: Population millions	3 223.2	85.0
Economy: Annual GNP US\$ x 000	23 712	232

(Source of Data: World Bank, 2022).

Education wise to Iran can add significant value to the BRICS formation of nations. With 3.2 million university students, Iran will bring the total higher education enrollment in the BRICS countries to 106.9 million. Iran will also add 8.7 million primary school students and 6.1 million secondary school students to the BRICS total.

BRICS + Iran and the future trajectory of Comparative and International Education

In a recent survey of the field of Comparative and International Education, have identified the following five features, which the field assumed at some decisive stage in the past but which hamper the field at present (Wolhuter & Jacobs, 2022):

- unresponsiveness or a lack of adequate response to new vistas beckoning;
- the “black box syndrome”;
- the lack of an autochthonous theory;
- enduring Northern hegemony; and
- an inadequate presence at universities

In this section, the following five interrelated features of, will be unpacked:

How the enlarged BRICS grouping can spur CIE overcoming and superseding these features, to become a stronger and more significant field of scholarship.

Challenge 1 Facing Comparative and International Education:

Unresponsiveness or a lack of adequate response to new vistas beckoning

While the societal context of the twenty-first-century education and the concomitantly evolving education praxis (that is praxis from the level of education system planning and policy formulation, to praxis at the level of institutions and classrooms) are ceaselessly opening new and exciting vistas for the scholars of the field of Comparative and International Education to explore, as is proclaimed in the title of the volume *Comparative and International Education: Survey of an Infinite Field* (CC Wolhuter & A Wiseman eds, 2019), scholars remain trapped in historically

trodden paths (see Wolhuter, 2008). For instance, the nation-state remains the principal level of analysis (see Wolhuter, 2008), despite Bray and Thomas (1995), in a publication more than a quarter of a century ago, having delineated an array of possible geographic levels of analysis. In an analysis of articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* during the decade 2010-2019, Wolhuter, Espinoza & McGinn (2023b) found that 59% of articles focused on the geographic level of the nation-state. This despite globalisation 3.0 gathering full force in this era, and theories such as Neo-Institutionalism and World Culture Theory having been enthusiastically embraced by leading scholars in the field. On the need for analysis lower than the geographic level of the nation-state, Payal Shah (2015) highlights the value of micro-studies and participatory research in giving voice to the downtrodden and the marginalized and their experience of education. Michelle Schweisfurth (2020: 90) criticizes the field of Comparative and International Education, alleging that in colonial and still today in post-colonial times the field is characterized by Western-, Euro-, and North American-centricity that have led contexts outside these regions being poorly comprehended.

Challenge 2 Facing Comparative and International Education:

The enduring “Black box” character of the field

Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, the field of Comparative and International Education has been beset by the persistence of the so-called “black box” character of the field, whereby things outside the education system receive more attention than that which takes place within the education system. This is a remnant of the “factors and forces” stage in the evolution of the field (see Wolhuter, 2021). Within this imbalance of attention to “things outside the education system” versus attention to “things inside the education system” a further imbalance exists with respect to the first. Shaping forces persist in attracting more scholarship than the outcomes or impact of education systems (despite the interest of the social science phase) – the other side of what is outside the “black box” (see: Wolhuter, 2008; Wolhuter, Espinoza & McGinn, 2023a).

But both these (shaping forces and outcomes) by far exceed the attention paid to education and the education system per se. More than forty years ago, in a highly cited paper, Stephen Heyneman’s (1979) argued for scholars in the field to rather turn to everyday reality taking place within classrooms and education institutions. Twenty years later, William Cummings, in his Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Presidential Address, entitled, “The

Institutions of Education: Compare, Compare, Compare!”, made a passionate plea for comparativists to shift their attention to the study of education institutions.

In recent decades the scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education have begun to increase their focus on that which is taking place within classrooms and education institutions (see Wolhuter et al., 2023). Cambridge comparativist Robin Alexander, trailblazing publication and voluminous 2001 book, argues the potential value of studying pedagogy from a comparative education perspective (Alexander, 2001). However, that what is actually happening inside education systems and institutions remain the central blind spot in the field, largely overlooked by researchers even today. In a recent journal survey, Schweisfurth, Thomas and Smal (2020) found only 51 journal papers published on the topic since 2000 – clearly a part of the scope of Comparative and International Education under-researched by scholars in the field.

Challenge 3 Dearth of autochthonous theory in the field

The third challenge in comparative and international education is the lack of an autochthonous theory in the field. In the recently published *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Theory in Comparative and International Research*, editors Tavis D. Jules, Robin Shields and Murray A.M. Thomas (2021) survey 27 theories extant in the field. None of these were formulated by scholars of Comparative and International Education, nor are the main exponents of these theories in the field of Comparative Education: they are to be found in fields such as the Economic Sciences, Sociology, Political Science, the Behavioural Sciences, and Anthropology.

An indication of the severity of this feature of the field is the view of a leading scholar in the field, Erwin Epstein (2008, p. 373), that Comparative Education is nothing but an applied study of the total methodological apparatus of social sciences, applied to solve education problems or challenges. This idea that Comparative and International Education is an interdisciplinary field (with the implied statement that it does not constitute a fully-fledged scholarly field on its own), is rife among other scholars in the field too, such as Reading University comparativist Keith Watson (2012). It has been a long standing dispute, even among scholars in the field whether Comparative and International Education is a discipline (in fact in one of the first volumes of the flagship journal of the field, *Comparative Education Review*, an article by Kathleen Heath (1958) entitled “Is

Comparative Education a Discipline?”, deals with this question, without being able to supply an answer or argue a case for or against) or even whether it constitutes a field (e.g. see Manzon, 2007).

This author has argued that the existence of over forty professional Comparative Education societies worldwide, the oldest of which has been going on for over sixty years, ever expanding in terms of membership numbers; the existence of a World Council of Comparative Education Societies sustaining momentum for over fifty years and organising every three years a World Conference of Comparative Education, as well as the existence of at least fifteen scholarly journals exclusively devoted to Comparative Education, are all proof of the existence of a field of scholarship with a common, exclusive object of study (Wolhuter & Jacobs, 2022). This author (Wolhuter, 2021a) has also argued that the following three in one perspective constitutes the distinct object of study of Comparative and International Education:

- an education system perspective: Comparative Education studies education systems (of which national education systems is the most salient). Even when the topic of study is on one of the elements of the education system, for example the curriculum, what distinguished Comparative Education from Curriculum Studies is that Comparative Education studies the curriculum as part of the entire education system.
- a contextual perspective: Comparative Education studies education systems in their interrelationship with the societal contexts in which these systems are embedded. That means education systems are studied and understood as the outcome of societal contextual forces (of a geographical, demographical, economic, socio-cultural, political and religious and life and world philosophical nature), and conversely the societal outcomes of education systems (that is the effect of education systems on society, such as on social mobility or on economic growth) are also in the scope of study
- a comparative perspective: Thirdly Comparative Education compares various education systems, each in its own societal context. The objective is to arrive at more precise statements on education system-societal context interrelationships.

Finally there is the “International Education” part in the name “Comparative and International Education”. Recently it has become evident that the scholarly field of Comparative Education is evolving into Comparative and International Education, the idea is that single/limited area studies and comparisons then eventually feed into the all-encompassing, global study of the international

education project. This latter, studying education from a global lens, is what is denoted by “International Education”. This is the object of study of Comparative and International Education, and there is a dearth of theoretical frameworks build with the prime aim of describing and understanding this object of study.

Challenge 4: Northern Hegemony in the field, the need to counter Northern Hegemony and the Affirmation of the Global South in the field

There is currently amongst scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education widespread criticism against Northern Hegemony extant in the field. Criticism against Northern Hegemony in the field is evident in the following related strands in the current discourse in the field: criticism of the imposition of one model of development; criticism of foreign aid and of international agencies; anti-globalization; criticism of neo-liberal economics and its impact on education; calls for the decolonization of education and of Comparative and International Education; criticism of racism in education and in Comparative and International Education; an appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems; and allegations that scholars of the Global South find themselves on an unequal playing field (see Wolhuter et al., 2023). Against this (alleged) Northern Hegemony in the field, stands the rise of the Global South on the global scene, as was explained earlier in this paper. Both out of considerations of firstly social justice and the philanthropic ideal of Comparative Education and secondly to be a more accurate reflection of what is taking place in the world today, there is a need for the Global South to be accorded its rightful place in the field.

It was explained earlier that BRICS constitute the vanguard of the Global South formation of nations, and that the BRICS grouping will be further strengthened by the addition of Iran. Thus a BRICS with Iran is ideally suited to rise to the occasion to let the Global South takes its rightful place in Comparative and International Education, with scholars of the enlarged BRICS raising their profile in Comparative and International Education scholarly books and journals, at international Comparative and International Education conferences, and in focusing their research on education in BRICS countries, in other Global South countries, and by conducting and publishing Global South-Global South comparative studies.

Challenge 5: Arrest and reverse the fading presence of Comparative and International Education at universities

The last challenging feature in the field is its declining presence at universities in terms of university infrastructure, chairs, programmes, and place in initial teacher education and in graduate education programmes. Wolhuter, Popov, Leutwyler and Ermenc' (eds) (2013) edited volume of the profile of the field in 43 countries/regions worldwide give the impression of a variegated pattern. However, in large parts of the world, including the North American and Western European, historically the heartland of the field, the impression is unmistakably one of a field of declining fortunes, at least as measured by stand-alone programmes and courses, and university chairs. In a small number of countries in these regions, such as Spain and Greece, it did raise its profile in recent decades, as was the case in the countries in East Europe in general.

There are many parts of the Global South where the field stands strong at universities in terms of its place in programmes, though not in terms of research output. In the set of BRICS countries the position of the field at universities forms an interesting pattern. In Brazil it has been phased out as stand-alone courses in programmes, although Brazil has a strong Comparative and International Education Society. In Russia the field is not strong at universities, neither in programmes nor in terms of research activity. In India an active Comparative Education Society has been resuscitated in recent years, but at universities it is not prominent in programmes. While research output can be shown, much of these come from scholars from other fields of scholarship such as Developmental Studies. The Comparative Education Society of India has recently been resuscitated, after having been dormant for quite some time. Comparative and International Education Scholars in India have also been visibly active in the Indian Ocean Islands Comparative Education Society. It is an indication of the value attached by the international Comparative and International Education community to Comparative and International Education scholarly activity taking place in India, that the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) has awarded the bid to host the next Comparative Education World Conference to India. Batra (2019) argues that the field has considerable promise in view of the need to reduce education inequality in India, and in view of the current spate of education reforms (that commenced in 1990) intended to i.e. reduce education inequality and also at addressing the issue of the curriculum, which has been a source of widespread dissatisfaction ever since the gaining of independence in 1947. Policy makers draw strongly on foreign experience in drafting plans for and policies of reform.

China has seen a meteoric rise in the fortunes of Comparative Education, both the teaching and the research sides, since the early 1980s as part of China's "open door" policy (see Manzon, 2013). A scholarly interest in matters of foreign education in China, however, can be detected back to the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, i.e. by the existence of translated texts on foreign education, and the appearance of the journal on world education (Pe Symaco & Chao, 2019). The Comparative Education Society of China is now, in terms of membership numbers, the second largest in the world (after the United States of America based Comparative and International Education Society, CIES). Then there is also the very active Hong Kong Comparative Education Society. Mark Bray and his team of comparativists have placed the University of Hong Kong on the map of Comparative and International Education, while the Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong is a very prolific publisher of Comparative Education books. An indication of the stature of China in the world community of Comparative Education is that the 2016 World Conference of Comparative Education bid was awarded to China. Some Normal Universities require students in their third year to study Comparative Education, at other Normal Universities it is an elective (Manzon, 2008: 242).

South Africa has been the launching pad of the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES), which was founded in 1991, and soon after admitted to the WCCES. SACHES also hosted the tenth Comparative Education World Conference, which took place in Cape Town in 1998. In terms of place in university programmes of teacher education and post-graduate Education programmes, however, Comparative Education has fallen on hard ground the past thirty years. In the 1980s Faculties of Education at most South African universities had Departments of Comparative Education. All these have now disappeared and faculty exclusively occupied with teaching of and doing research in Comparative and International Education do not total not more than twenty (for a full description and explanation of this sorry trajectory, see Weeks, Herman, Maarman & Wolhuter, 2006). While similarly just about half a dozen of South African universities now offer stand-alone Comparative and International Education courses, Comparative and International Education is subsumed in courses such as Education and Development, Education in Africa, Education and Democracy, Globalisation and Education, and Decolonisation and Education (see Wolhuter, 2019). The problem with such an arrangement is that students never get introduced to the scope and breadth of the field of Comparative and International Education, its rich history and inspiring gallery of top scholars, and the full range of its theoretical and methodological

instrumentarium and corpus of knowledge. The most recent directive of the South African Ministry of Higher Education and Training makes explicit provision for the inclusion of Comparative and International Education in stand-alone courses in undergraduate teacher education programmes as well as post-graduate Education courses (see Wolhuter & Nyatuka, 2023). However, up to now most Faculties of Education at South African universities have not yet seized this opportunity enthusiastically. Concern has also been expressed that progressive scholars in the field have lost much of their sharp critical voice, after the socio-political change in 1994 (see Weeks et al., 2006).

In South Africa several research institutes, while not boasting the name of Comparative Education institutes, do commendable research drawing on international comparisons in the field of education (Wolhuter, 2019). In this regard mention can be made of the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of the Western Cape, and the Inter-university Centre for Education Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria. Further to these there are research institutes of a statutory nature or run by non-governmental organisations. These include the National Research Foundation, the Human Sciences Research Council, the Centre for Higher Education Transformation, the Centre of Education Policy Development, the Academy of Sciences of South Africa, and the Centre for Development of Enterprise. While international journals in the field of Comparative and International Education do feature education in Africa frequently in their published articles, these articles are often written by scholars not based in Africa, a pattern with a number of disadvantages attached (*cf.* Biraimah, 2006, see also Wolhuter, 2008; Wolhuter, Espinoza & McGinn, 2023a).

In Iran Comparative Education is strong in terms of being taught at universities for seventy years, and there has been a vibrant research activity too (see: Eskandari & Eskandari, 2013), while there exist a young but vibrant Comparative Education Society. This Society has had its inaugural conference five years ago, has organised a second conference two years later, and is planning a third conference for October 2022. The Society has also started a journal which has, at the time of writing (23 September 2022) published 134 articles. At the time of writing, October 2022, these articles have been downloaded more than 2200 times in different countries in the world. The journal has won international indexing (i.e. in the Directory of Open Access Journals, DOAJ). Further to this, in recent years education and higher education policy makers in Iran have attached great value to this area of study as a means to enhance quality. A Department of Comparative Studies and Innovation in Higher Education has been established in the Institute of Research and

Planning for Higher Education affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (Eskandari & Eskandari, 2013: 303).

Thus Comparative and International Education at universities within the BRICS grouping is showing a chequered pattern. However there is definitely a critical mass (in terms of researchers, journals and professional societies) to spearhead a quest towards the Global South taking up its rightful place in Comparative and International Education. Particular ways by which scholars of Comparative and International Education at universities in the BRICS countries can mobilise include the development of programmes (including Masters and Doctoral Programmes) of Comparative and International Education in which the Global South and perspectives from the Global South can be more foregrounded, and research activities should be strengthened and used for this purpose. The synergy created by Comparative and International Education journals located in the BRICS countries as well the Comparative and International Education societies in these countries can be harnessed for this purpose too. Internationalisation, becoming a node for Global South students (inbound international student mobility), and intra-BRICS student exchange too have much scope, as do faculty exchange along these same vectors.

Conclusion

An objectionable feature of the current state of the field of Comparative and International Education is that of Northern Hegemony. Against this Northern Hegemony stands the rising Global South. The BRICS countries form the vanguard of the Global South formation, and this will be more so if the prospect of Iran joining the BRICS grouping materialise. Within the BRICS formation Comparative and International Education has a critical mass (in terms of researchers, journals and Comparative Education societies) to take a leading role in addressing the full range of challenges facing the field, but above all, of securing the Global South its rightful place in the Comparative and International Education scholarly field. Thus scholars of Comparative and International Education in a new, enlarged BRICS grouping can make a meaningful contribution in taking the field of Comparative and International Education forward. South-South comparative studies, and in particular intra-BRICS comparative studies would be very valuable.

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