

WORLD EDUCATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

**International Research Network (IRN)
on**

**Global Curricular Representations and Teachers' Enactment of Ancient and
Indigenous Cultures and Wisdom Traditions**

**PROGRESS REPORT
June 2024**

Submitted by IRN Co-conveners:

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IRN duration: 1 July 2023 – 30 April 2026

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1) The Aim of IRN

The IRN will seek to support and foster collaboration among researchers exploring curricular and textbook representations of traditionally marginalized ancient as well as Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions in curricula and textbooks. Further, it will seek to initially explore potential areas of collaboration regarding teachers' enactment of such content in their classroom practices.

More specifically, in its first phase (Phase 1) the IRN will seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Shed light and bring more attention (for the academic community, policy and curriculum developers, teacher educators, and teachers) to this generally overlooked research question, including the traditionally and historically marginalized cultures and wisdom traditions themselves and the need for more balanced and inclusive curricular representations.
- Support graduate students and emerging scholars better articulate their research focus and agendas, including by encouraging them to pursue a stronger focus on these understudied and often ignored questions
- Help members identify and pursue means for collaboration, including on joint scholarly publications, academic conference presentations, and conducting research (through identifying and jointly applying for research funding and support).
- Offer capacity building and mentoring opportunities for graduate students and emerging scholars (e.g., by offering the platform for more senior and established scholars such as Prof. Konstantinos Giakoumis; Prof. tavis jules; Prof. George Sefa Dei, among others, to share their expertise as well as mentor and support emerging scholars and graduate students who are part of the IRN)

Promising track record with virtual meetings and discussions: As noted, the group of founders have all been involved contributors into the Edited Volume entitled “*Reconciling Ancient and Indigenous Belief Systems: Textbooks and Curricula in Contention*”. During this period this group convened for a few times online via Zoom. Those online virtual discussions were fruitful, inspiring, and productive, and thus give us all confidence that the current proposed members, as well as new members who would be joining, will all be able to meaningfully engage with each other virtually. Further, the group has also had several active email discussions and exchanges which is another reason for our confidence that this group – and hopefully new members joining the IRN – would be able to utilize virtual platforms fully towards achieving the key objectives outlined.

2) Expected Outcomes of IRN

As outlined in the proposal submitted, the IRN's activities will lead to some concrete outcomes, including but not limited to some of the following:

- a) Fostering exchanges and collaborations that will result in academic publications produced by members of the IRN as well as presentations at relevant academic conferences;
- b) Capturing the current global state of research and knowledge about this topic will result in the production and dissemination of the final synthesis report;

- c) Creating awareness about the importance of issue through disseminating findings to academic and non-academic audiences, including through organizing the virtual *Global Dissemination Conference*;
- d) Based on the ongoing mentoring and training opportunities offered, we also foresee an important outcome pertaining to better trained, equipped, and more confident graduate students and emerging scholars; and,
- e) Finally, we hope that all of the above will also lead to an important outcome pertaining to stimulating new collaborations, synergies, and influencing research agendas. This would include encouraging some established and emerging scholars to expand their research agendas to more centrally integrate some of those dimensions.

3) Work Accomplished

– Activities to date and progress

- **Founding meetings:** We held two virtual meetings which were an important opportunity for networking between members, identifying potential means for collaboration, and agreeing on next steps. Those took place on January 17th and April 11th, 2024.
- **Expansion of membership base:** Several new members joined the IRN over the past few months, including: Ramy Barhouche (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada); Fadhila Hadjeris (University of California, Los Angeles, USA); and Victoria Desimoni (Arizona University, USA). We are pleased to welcome them and are grateful for the expertise, energy, and passion they bring to the IRN.

– List of publications:

- Several founding members of this WERA IRN have made important chapter contributions to the two forthcoming edited volumes (appearing as part of the *Studies in Curriculum Theory Series*, Edited by Prof. William Pinar, University of British Columbia, Canada):
1. Abdou, E. D. & Zervas, T. G. (Eds.) (2024a). *Ancient and Indigenous Wisdom Traditions in African and Euro-Asian Contexts: Towards More Balanced Curricular Representations and Classroom Practices*. Routledge.
 2. Abdou, E. D. & Zervas, T. G. (Eds.) (2024b). *Ancient and Indigenous Wisdom Traditions in the Americas: Towards More Balanced Curricular Representations and Classroom Practices*. Routledge.



4) Future Plans

- 1) **Capacity Building Workshops:** The WERA IRN members agreed on the following capacity building workshops to be held online in October and November 2024:
 - a) **Academic conferences and publishing:** This online workshop is to be designed and led by Dr. tavis jules. Dr. jules kindly confirmed interest. We're working on details and date, etc. Dr. jules envisions this as being open to anyone who might be interested, but possibly catering more/geared towards graduate students and emerging scholars from the Global South. Once details are ready, we'll share and ask you all to please to try to attend as well as share widely among your networks.
 - b) **Textual analysis workshop:** This online workshop is to be designed and led by Dr. Denise Bentreovato, University of Pretoria (South Africa) and Dr. Ehaab Abdou. Discussions are underway.
- 2) **Panel discussion on textual analysis:** This will be a *panel discussion/symposium focused on holistic approaches to textbook analysis*. This will be co-led by Khodi Kaviani and Rafael V. Capó García. Khodi and Rafael kindly confirmed interest and proposed structure. We're working on details and specific date.
- 3) **Special Section of the Comparative Education Review Journal:** The Editorial Team of the prestigious and widely respected [Comparative Education Review](#) (CER) journal have agreed on a Special Section focusing on the topic of this IRN. The Special Section will be co-edited by IRN members and co-conveners: Dr. Theodore G. Zervas; Dr. Konstantinos Giakoumis; and, Dr. Ehaab Abdou. We envision this Special Section as a platform to include contributions by some WERA IRN members as well as other scholars working on international and comparative education and analyses. The Call for Papers (CfP) has been issued and we are anticipating the publication of this Special Section by 2026. *Please see the CfP in Annex I.*
- 4) **Working towards the IRN's Synthesis Report:** We see the aforementioned Special Section publication along with the two edited volumes co-edited by the WERA IRN co-conveners, and including several contributions by the IRN, as offering an essential and solid foundation to help us develop and finalize the IRN's Synthesis Report by early 2026.

5) List of IRN Members (name, affiliation, position, email address):

1) Ehaab D. Abdou, PhD (Canada/Egypt) (co-convenor)

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6) tavis deryck jules (*written in lowercase*), PhD (USA/The Caribbean)

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Annex: Call for Papers

Call for Papers

Special Section of the Comparative Education Review Journal (CER)

Ancient and Indigenous Histories and Wisdom Traditions: Comparative Studies in Curricular Representations and Classroom Practices

Guest Editors of the CER Special Section:

Dr. Ehaab D. Abdou, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada

Dr. Theodore G. Zervas, North Park University, USA

Dr. Konstantinos Giakoumis, LOGOS University College, Albania

CER Co-Editors:

Dr. tavis d. jules, Loyola University Chicago, USA

Dr. Florin D. Salajan, North Dakota State University, USA

CER is sponsored by the [*Comparative and International Education Society*](#)

I. Background

How can some of the worldviews and teachings promoted by ancient and Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions contribute to a more just, equitable, harmonious, peaceful, and sustainable world? What can they contribute to addressing some of humanity's most daunting challenges, such as the climate crisis? What important values and practices might we—as a human civilization—have lost over the millennia due to the (mis)representations or negation of ancient and Indigenous cultures, histories, and wisdom traditions? Further, how do such representations shape K-12 schoolteachers' and students' understandings of their own histories, as well as their approaches to other groups' cultures, wisdom traditions, contributions, and historical or current injustices and struggles? And how can comparative and international analyses of different contexts—and the various forces and discourses shaping them—help us identify ways to create more balanced and inclusive curricular representations and classroom practices vis-à-vis those cultures, histories, and traditions?

Representations of ancient history are a generally understudied topic, including when it comes to their representations in K-12 school curricula and textbooks (e.g., Zervas & Abdou, 2022).¹ However, despite it being a nascent field of inquiry, it is reassuring to see the question—of how various nations' curricula and textbooks represent their ancient and Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions—gain more traction and interest over the past few years, including by scholars in various geographical contexts in Africa, the Americas, and Euro-Asia (e.g., Abdou & Zervas, 2024a, 2024b).² Yet, there clearly is a need for further investigation into this highly understudied

¹ Zervas, T. & Abdou, E. D. (2022). Modern Education and National Identity in Greece and Egypt: (Re)producing the Ancient in the School Textbook. In D. Tröhler, N. Piattoeva, & W. Pinar (Eds.), *World Yearbook in Education: Education, Schooling and the Global Universalization of Banal Nationalism* (pp. 66-83). Routledge.

² For more details about the definitions used, analytical approaches adopted, and contexts studied, please feel free to review the edited volumes: 1) Abdou, E. D. & Zervas, T. G. (Eds.) (2024a). *Ancient and Indigenous Wisdom Traditions in African and Euro-Asian Contexts: Towards*

topic, including through solid comparative studies that would help us gain further insight through comparing and contrasting such representations across more than one context.

The ultimate aim of this *Comparative Education Review (CER) Special Section* is to contribute to more balanced K-12 curricular representations and classroom practices vis-à-vis ancient and Indigenous histories, cultures, and wisdom traditions. It has two key objectives: 1) to continue to deepen our understanding of, and critical engagement with, curricular representations and classroom practices vis-à-vis ancient and Indigenous histories, cultures, and wisdom traditions in various contexts; and, 2) to gain additional insight that would emerge through adopting comparative approaches between various contexts.

More specifically, this *CER Special Section* will attempt to explore and elucidate some of the following key questions across various contexts:

- 1) *How do national school textbooks and curricula portray the nation's ancient history, culture, and wisdom traditions? Relatedly, how do these curricula represent the nation's existing Indigenous cultures and wisdom traditions, in contexts where those still exist and are being practiced?*
- 2) *What commonalities and differences emerge when we compare such representations in two or more contexts?*
- 3) *How do these textual constructions and representations shape teachers' and students' worldviews and attitudes (in contexts where this question might have been explored)?*

II. Contributions Sought

We invite paper submissions that attempt to address any or all of the aforementioned questions. All papers will be expected to adopt a comparative approach, comparing **at least two different national contexts** through conducting textual analyses of some of the contexts' relevant school textbooks and/or curricular guidelines. The contexts compared do not necessarily have to be from the same geographical region or continent. We encourage contributions from emerging and established scholars, as well as graduate students, studying these questions in any context where they might be relevant. While this *CER Special Section* is grounded in curriculum studies as well as comparative and international education, we also welcome contributions grounded in other disciplines. Full papers would be expected to not exceed 8,000 words, including references (and annexes, where applicable). Authors of accepted abstracts will be expected to follow CER's manuscript submission guidelines and peer review process.

III. Submission Procedures

- 1) **Abstracts:** Interested authors are invited to submit abstracts of approximately **500 to 700 words**. The abstract should include: 1) a tentative title of the paper; 2) the paper's key argument(s); 3) the two or more geographical contexts that will be compared in the paper; 4) theoretical and conceptual grounding of the paper; and, 5) methodology, including some details about the school textbooks and/or curricular guidelines being analyzed.
- 2) **Authors' Details:** Along with the abstracts, please submit: 1) the names of the proposed paper author(s); 2) a few sentences briefly outlining each of the authors' past and/or

More Balanced Curricular Representations and Classroom Practices. Routledge; and, 2) Abdou, E. D. & Zervas, T. G. (Eds.) (2024b). *Ancient and Indigenous Wisdom Traditions in the Americas: Towards More Balanced Curricular Representations and Classroom Practices*. Routledge.
More details about the edited volumes at: <https://www.routledge.com/Studies-in-Curriculum-Theory-Series/book-series/LEASCTS>

current experiences in the context(s) under study (including a list of relevant publications, if applicable); 3) full institutional affiliations of author(s); and 4) email addresses of all contributing authors.

3) Important Guidelines:

- a) All abstract submissions are expected to follow the CER style guide and Chicago Citation Style (5th Edition). For more details, please feel free to visit the instructions for authors page on the CER website:
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/journals/cer/instruct>
- b) All abstract and author details submissions and inquiries should be sent via email to CER_SpecialSection@luc.edu with the subject line “Special Section CER 2026”.
- c) The deadline for submitting abstracts is **Sunday September 1st, 2024**.

IV. Timeline & Key Milestones

September 1, 2024	Deadline to submit abstracts.
November, 2024	Authors of accepted and rejected abstracts to be notified of the reviewers’ decision. <i>All abstracts will be closely reviewed by the three guest editors. The CER co-editors will also be consulted throughout the selection process.</i>
April, 2025	Authors of accepted abstracts expected to submit their full articles for review, no later than April 2025.
Spring, 2026	Special Section of the Comparative Education Review Journal published <i>(tentatively to be published during first half of 2026)</i> .