

Session code: 5-1-A205**Title:** Contextualising national identity after the demise of national character**Contributer/s:** Susara Berkhout

Abstract : "National character" has been one of the founding concepts of comparative education studies. It still features prominently as a concept in comparative literature, most international evaluation studies / inquiries are conceptualized in national terms and comparisons juxtapose findings based on data collected around similar "categories" and / or indicators within a national context. This extends to performance indicators and league tables whereby standardized hierarchies of prominence is constructed and learners' subjectivities shaped. The rights to power (as reflected in national policies) and the distribution of resources are still mainly based on the subject's national identity.

Globalisation and local discourses, however, interact to construct complex and dynamic notions of the "self" that pose special challenges to conceptualizing comparative international studies. If one, furthermore, assumes that context is not an external force but is integrally part of identity (network of interactive linkages) interpreting data representing national education systems becomes especially challenging. In this paper I would like to explore some of the challenges posed to contextualising comparative studies when national character seems to have lost its representational and constructive power.