

## **EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION**

### **TRADITION, CHANGE, AND THE ROLE OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETIES**

The articles in this collection are revised versions of papers presented at the 11th World Congress of Comparative Education, held in Korea in July 2001. This introductory article explains the background of the event at which the papers were presented and shows how they may be viewed within the context of broader trends in the field of comparative education. This field has undergone certain major shifts over the decades. Some of these shifts have been evident in the work of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), an umbrella body which currently encompasses 30 national, regional and language-based bodies in the field. The most visible activities of the WCCES since its creation in 1970 have been a series of World Congresses of Comparative Education. The 11th World Congress was hosted by the Korean Comparative Education Society (KCES), and held at the Korean National University of Education at Chungbuk. The event brought together 400 some specialists in comparative education from all regions of the globe.

The theme of the World Congress was “New Challenges, New Paradigms: Moving Education into the 21st Century”. Since new challenges and paradigms can of course only be identified with reference to old ones, the overall title for this collection of articles makes reference to continuing traditions as well as to new developments.

This introductory article begins by providing further information on the WCCES. It then turns to some historical traditions before focusing on the ways in which the field is changing with the new century.

#### **The WCCES and its constituent societies**

The first article in the collection, by David Wilson, was the Presidential Address at the 11th World Congress. Wilson had been President of the World Council from 1996, and was completing his second term of office. Since the article includes commentary on the nature of the WCCES, some details can be omitted here. However, it is still useful to provide some contextual information.

The WCCES was formed 1970, having evolved from an International Committee of Comparative Education Societies which had been convened by Joseph Katz, of the University of British Columbia in Canada, in 1968 (Epstein 1981: 261). Five societies came together to form the Council, namely:



- the Comparative & International Education Society (CIES) of the USA, founded in 1956;
- the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE), founded in 1961,
- the Japanese Comparative Education Society (JCES), founded in 1964,
- the Comparative & International Education Society of Canada (CIESC), founded in 1967, and
- the Korean Comparative Education Society (KCES), founded in 1968.

It is worth noting that two of the five were Asian societies. Some scholars have asserted that the field of comparative education was first established in Europe and then spread to the USA before reaching other parts of the world (see e.g. Epstein 1994; Sherman Swing 1997; Gu 2001). An alternative view might be that the field had multiple origins (Halls 1990; Zhang and Wang 1997); but it is undeniable that significant work was developed in Europe during the 19th century and that developments were paralleled by work in the USA during the first half of the 20th century. Towards the end of the 20th century, however, an increasing volume of work was being conducted in Asia (Kobayashi 1990; Bray and Gui 2001), and this greatly shifted the global balance. The fourth World Congress in 1980 was held in Asia, hosted by the JCES with an official pre-Congress event organised by the KCES. The fact that the World Congress was again held in Asia in 2001 was both a reflection of and a stimulus for further development in the region.

The development of comparative education in the region, it must be admitted, was not entirely linear or smooth. The Comparative Education Society of India (CESI), for example, was launched with vigour in 1979 but during the 1980s and 1990s gradually fell into neglect. The society did send a representative to the meeting of the WCCES Executive Committee at the time of the 11th World Congress, and that representative had hopes of reviving the society. However, the task was to inject life into a body which had been practically dormant for over a decade.

In contrast was the fact that the World Council had over the years admitted a number of other Asian societies which had been very active. These were:

- the Chinese Comparative Education Society-Taipei (CCES-T), which was established in 1974 and entered the World Council in 1990;
- the China Comparative Education Society (CCES), founded in 1979 and admitted to the World Council in 1984;
- the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), created in 1989 and admitted to the World Council in 1992; and
- the regional Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA), which was established in 1995 and joined the World Council in 1996.

In addition, a Philippines Comparative Education Society was formed in 2002 and admitted to the World Council in the same year.

These events are listed because they formed part of the context for the deliberations of the 11th World Congress. Previous Congress organisers have

found that the location of the Congress has had a significant impact on the characteristics of the events. The previous congresses had been held in Canada (1970), Switzerland (1974), United Kingdom (1977), Japan (1980), France (1984), Brazil (1997), Canada (1989), Czechoslovakia (1992), Australia (1996), and South Africa (1998). As might be expected, the Congresses in Europe had particularly strong representation from Europe, while the one in Africa had the largest ever participation of Africans. The 11th World Congress followed this pattern, with particularly strong representation from Asia. To some extent, this is reflected in the balance of papers presented here.

### **Continuity and change in comparative education**

#### *Benchmarks in the field*

One useful benchmark for the field is a pair of special numbers of the journal *Comparative Education* published in 2000 and 2001. The first (Crossley and Jarvis 2000a) was stimulated by the turn of the millennium in the Western calendar, and was entitled *Comparative Education for the Twenty-first Century*. The eight contributors were members of the journal's UK-based editorial board. The second special number (Crossley and Jarvis 2001), entitled *Comparative Education for the Twenty-first Century: An International Response*, contained work by 10 authors based in six different countries. The pair of special numbers could not claim representation of perspectives from all world regions, let alone all major disciplinary perspectives; but the pair did make valuable statements about the evolution and current state of the field.

The pair of millennial special numbers themselves used as a benchmark an earlier special number, published in 1977 and entitled *Comparative Education: Its Present State and Future Prospects* (Grant 1977). That publication had been timed to contribute to the 3rd World Congress of Comparative Education, held in the United Kingdom. Noting evolution in the field since 1977, Crossley and Jarvis observed (2000b: 261) that:

The significance of continuity with the past emerges as a core theme in the collective articles and many contributions echo a number of still fundamental issues raised previously in 1977. Most notably these include: the multi-disciplinary and applied strengths of the field; “the complexities of this kind of study”; the dangers of the “misapplication of findings”; the importance of theoretical analysis and methodological rigour; the (often unrealised and misunderstood) policy-oriented potential; and the enduring centrality of the concepts of cultural context and educational transfer for the field as a whole.

At the same time, Crossley and Jarvis noted that the world had changed significantly since 1977. In particular, they observed (2000b: 261) that most contributors to the millennial special number saw the future of the field in a

more optimistic but more problematic light than had been the case in 1977. This was attributed to a combination of factors, and in particular:

the exponential growth and widening of interest in international comparative research, the impact of computerised communications and information technologies, increased recognition of the cultural dimension of education, and the influence of the intensification of globalisation upon all dimensions of society and social policy world-wide.

Crossley and Jarvis (2000b: 263) also observed a number of new directions for the field, including “new substantive issues, and the potential of more varied and multi-level units of analysis, including global, intra-national and micro-level comparisons”. Each of these deserves elaboration and commentary in connection with the present set of articles.

#### *Tools for research and communication*

Wilson’s article in the present collection is directly concerned with the tools used in the field of comparative education for research and communication. Taking a historical approach, Wilson notes that the primary modes of communication used by early practitioners were correspondence with like-minded colleagues, and publications of descriptions, analyses and theories about education and training in different countries. Correspondence and publications remain primary modes of communication, but the media through which the correspondence and publications are conducted have undergone significant changes. Wilson highlights the importance of the Internet and other computer-based technologies, observing that:

The advent of web pages at international organisations and national statistical services has revolutionised how basic research is undertaken in our field. The development of Internet search engines a decade ago and meta-search engines five years ago has also transformed our research capabilities.

Wilson also notes that the advent of desktop publishing by means of personal computers has contributed to the proliferation of journals and books. Most of these journals and books remain paper productions; but some exist in both paper and electronic form, and a few are exclusively in electronic form. Most analysts agree that the trend of increased use of electronic media will continue. Yet just as the use of radio did not disappear after the invention of television, paper books and journals are unlikely to disappear despite the invention of electronic communications. The precise nature of the mix, however, is likely to vary in different countries and parts of those countries. Some countries, institutions, social groups and individuals are more prosperous and more adventurous than others, and therefore better placed to invest in the new technologies. This itself can be a useful subject for comparative analysis.

Further, the advent of information technologies is not universally

welcomed. The opening remarks at the 11th World Congress by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education & Human Resources Development of the Republic of Korea (Han 2001: 2) noted that the increased access to information had, in addition to its positive benefits, exposed children and others to “a flood of harmful and devious information”. He called on parents, teachers, civil sectors and governments to work together to address this problem; and, presenting a specific challenge for comparative educationists, he continued:

In this age of information, I believe educators must realize the significance of wisdom as “know-why” as well as knowledge as “know-how”. Knowledge is not merely a sum of information. And wisdom is more than a sum of knowledge. Wisdom, knowledge, and information should always go together, but the most valuable among these is wisdom.

#### *Foci and topics*

Some topics in the field of comparative education have been popular for decades. Among them are issues of power and control, education for national development, importation of educational ideas, and reform of education. These themes are certainly represented in the present collection of articles. Thus Morgan’s article focuses on the hegemony of Western conceptions of science in Indigenous societies; Endo is concerned with issues of decentralisation and the education of minorities; Fujikane shows how curricula in some countries have been shaped by patterns in other countries; and Rao et al. show contrasting patterns in the development of primary education in China and India.

Yet, while some themes in comparative study of education have been longstanding, others have arisen relatively recently in conjunction with broader economic, political and social evolution. Morgan points out that in Western science, a new age emerged in the 1960s, “driven by theories of postmodernism, postcolonialism and feminism . . . that were not as reliant upon concrete conceptions of reality as Western sciences were perceived to be”. These theories have impacted on the field of comparative education as well as on other domains. Thus the 9th World Congress of Comparative Education was on the theme “Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernity in Comparative Education”, and the collection of papers based on that Congress (Masemann and Welch 1997) contained articles not only about postmodern relativism (Young 1997) but also feminism (Blackmore 1997). Similarly, the collection of papers from the 10th World Congress of Comparative Education (Soudien et al. 1999) included one by Tickly (1999) on postcolonialism and comparative education. Other writings which have shown the impact of such theories on comparative education include Cowen (1996), Rust (2000) and Lather (2000). In the present collection, Morgan’s article has clear links to this vein of literature, and the articles by Schulte and Numata are allied.

Another major theme which developed during the 1990s focused on what

Cowen (2000: 338) in the millennial special number of *Comparative Education* called “transitologies”. By this he meant the study of:

the more or less simultaneous collapse and reconstruction of (a) state apparatuses; (b) social and economic stratification systems; and (c) political visions of the future; in which (d) education is given a major symbolic and reconstructionist role in these social processes of destroying the past and redefining the future.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was clearly in this category, as were the parallel changes in Mongolia, Romania, Slovakia, and other parts of Eastern Europe. The present collection of articles includes Mitter’s work on Russia, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which builds on existing literature and includes specific reference to the work of Cowen. The articles by Zajda and Endo are related, for both primarily focus on educational changes in post-Soviet Russia. Zajda is concerned with the impact of social change and economic transformation on adult education, and Endo focuses on issues of decentralisation and reform in two regions of Russia.

Another theme which emerged at the end of the 20th century was that of globalisation. Wilson observes that in some senses globalisation could be considered as old as empires, and that “both Imperial Rome and Genghis Khan manifested globalisation”. Yet, as he also notes, globalisation greatly increased in pace and pervasiveness towards the end of the 20th century.

In the field of comparative education, major works on globalisation appearing around the turn of the century included Arnove and Torres (1999), Mebrahtu et al. (2000), and Burbules and Torres (2000). In the present collection, in addition to Wilson’s work, the article by Fujikane is clearly related to this theme. Fujikane has a particular focus on a subject called Global Education taught in schools in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. From the 1990s onwards, she notes:

new readings of the world altered older ideas about nation states and their inter-relationships. The world was now increasingly understood as “global”. The vocabulary of globalisation was used more extensively, and debates about “global education” emerged.

Fujikane’s article is an illuminating account of the similarities and differences in patterns in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan, and of the evolution of concepts over time.

A further emerging theme identified by Crossley and Jarvis (2000b: 263) was “increased recognition of the cultural dimension of education”. This theme has also been given prominence in World Congresses of Comparative Education. For example, the 9th Congress, in Sydney, included a Commission for Indigenous Education which brought a clear focus on this theme and led to publication of a book entitled *Local Knowledge and Wisdom in Higher Education* (Teasdale and Ma Rhea 2000). Other major publications in the field include Wielemans and Chan (1992), Leach and Little (1999), and Hayhoe and Pan (2001).

In the present collection of articles, the loudest statement on this theme is by Morgan. Writing about “appropriation, appreciation and accommodation”, Morgan identifies changing phases in the approaches of Western science to Indigenous forms of wisdom and knowledge. As an Aboriginal Australian, Morgan particularly has in mind the cultural settings in his own country; but he notes that the tensions are also found in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, the Philippines, parts of Africa, and Central and South America. Morgan’s analysis echoes the presentation by Brady (1997), who is also an Aboriginal Australian, at the 9th World Congress of Comparative Education. Although Morgan presents a continuum over time which seems to indicate that higher education institutions, in particular, have reached a state of accommodation, he notes that many issues remain unresolved.

Cultures are also a central focus of Schulte’s article, which is based on an etymological and semantic analysis of certain words in the Chinese language. One of these words is culture (*wenhua*) itself, for which Schulte contrasts the etymological root with its English-language counterpart, which is derived from the Latin *cultura*. Schulte also shows how certain words were absorbed from China into the Japanese language and then reimported to China in an adapted way. The article stresses that the reception of processes of foreign ideas concerning work, vocation, education, and vocational education, as well as the semantic patterns constructed around these processes, needs deep analysis. Schulte argues that: “Only a thorough insight into these makes a full understanding of Chinese modernity – and how it differs from Western modernity – possible.”

Hoffman’s perspective on culture is rather different. Her paper focuses mainly on child-rearing practices in the United States, but uses the tools of comparative education to call into question approaches which many American parents would take for granted. Her principal contrasts are drawn with practices in Japan. The field of comparative education can benefit from the insights of Spindler and Spindler (1982) in the field of anthropology. On the one hand, comparative education can make “strange patterns familiar”, i.e. can permit and encourage readers to become more familiar with the features of education systems and societies which are not well known to them; and on the other hand comparative education can make “familiar patterns strange”, calling into question features of education systems and societies which had been taken for granted by insiders simply because they were so familiar with them (Bray 1999: 222).

Numata’s work is also linked to culture. It takes a broad historical view of concepts of childhood in Graeco-Latin and Judaeo-Christian traditions, and shows how these concepts influenced thinking in East Asia when the latter was modernised. Numata argues that neither Western European nor East Asian culture has been able to actualise the world of children in the modern school system. In Western Europe this has resulted from lack of recognition of the existence of children, and in East Asia from forgetting traditional attitudes toward children and not carrying them over to the new school system.

Again, the juxtaposition of the two cultures and their historical antecedents exposes very instructive features that might not be so evident without the comparison.

*Units of analysis*

Elaborating on the point made in the Introduction to the millennial special number of *Comparative Education* (Crossley and Jarvis 2000b: 263), Crossley's sole-authored contribution to the special number (2000: 328) observed that:

While it is already possible to identify concerted efforts to promote, for example, micro-level qualitative fieldwork . . . and regional studies . . . , the nation state remains the dominant framework in published work, and few have explicitly considered the various levels.

Crossley added (p. 328) that:

Bray and Thomas's (1995) challenge for the field to embrace multi-level analyses thus deserves further attention, as do other initiatives designed to identify frameworks that effectively capture what Arnove and Torres (1999) have conceptualised as "the dialectic of the global and the local".

In the present collection of papers, several authors have addressed this concern. Endo, for example, focuses on Siberia and the Russian Far East. He analyses similarities and differences in these two regions within the national framework, and highlights the value of considering sub-national units when analysing reforms and their impact. With a rather different perspective, Bray and Yamato focus on systems of education in Hong Kong. Analysing the international schools sector in this microcosm, Bray and Yamato remark that their paper "lies at an intersection of cross-national and intra-national studies". They take a cue from the work of Raffe et al. (1999), who compared the education systems of the United Kingdom and, using a metaphor from football, made a case for study of "home internationals". The paper highlights the methodological insights that can be generated from intra-national study of education systems even when those systems are very small.

Other papers in effect take cultures as units of analysis. This is potentially more challenging, because, in contrast to administrative units such as provinces, regions and countries, it is often difficult to define where cultures begin and end. Hayhoe (2001: 2) has addressed the problems of broad distinctions between "Western" and "Eastern" cultures, but has acknowledged that such terms are widely used in the field of comparative education – as indeed is exemplified by Numata's article in this collection. Endo, by contrast, uses culture in a much narrower sense, mostly linking it to ethnicity and contrasting, for example, the cultures of minority Buryats and majority Russians in Irkutsk Oblast of the Russian Federation. Kim commences her article with broad reference to Western and Asian cultures, though then



narrows her focus to the cultures of middle-class Korean and white American children. Class is another dimension to culture which was not mentioned by Endo and only indirectly touched upon by Numata. The whole question of ways in which cultures can and should be defined and then compared needs considerably more discussion within the field of comparative education. This is among the challenges for the field at the threshold of the 21st century.

Meanwhile, it is instructive that among the 12 articles presented here, only three take countries as their basic unit of analysis. The first is the one by Rao, Cheng and Narain, who compare primary education in China and India; the second is by Mitter, who compares the impact of political transition in Russia, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic; and the third is by Fujikane, who compares approaches to global education in the United States, England and Japan. The fact that only one quarter of the articles explicitly take national level foci in this way is indicative of a further paradigmatic shift in the field. Certainly countries may remain instructive units of analysis for some types of study; but the fact that scholars are increasingly exploring other approaches is much to be welcomed.

## Conclusion

This introductory article has noted that the field of comparative education has changed over the decades. These changes have not affected all parts of the world equally, and Cowen (2000: 333) argued that in practice there is no single or unified field of comparative education but rather that there are multiple comparative educations. This observation is applicable not only to the differing traditions and emphases in different parts of the world, but also to different groups within particular countries who may or may not communicate with each other.

Nevertheless, despite the diversity it *is* possible to identify a global field. The most obvious manifestation of this field is the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, of which the most visible activities are the periodic World Congresses. Bringing together scholars from all major regions of the world, albeit with different emphases each time in part reflecting the location of the Congresses, the events act as forums for articulation and debate about the traditions and frontiers of the field. This collection of a dozen papers is only a small sample of the 390 papers presented at the 11th World Congress of Comparative Education. Nevertheless, it does provide an illuminating perspective on both ongoing traditions and new paradigms.

As noted above, Crossley and Jarvis (2000b: 261) felt that the contributors to the millennial special number of *Comparative Education* viewed the field in a “more optimistic but problematic light” than their counterparts had in the 1977 benchmark special number. The optimism was based not only on the availability of information technologies but also on “the exponential growth and widening of interest in international comparative research”. The

problematic features included diversity in viewpoints, which precludes scholars in the field from working towards uniform goals and from speaking with common ideological and methodological perspectives.

This message helps to underline the basic rationale and role of the WCCES. As a global body which brings together 30 member societies, and which works to spread the field of comparative education to regions and groups not currently served by such societies, the WCCES will remain a forum in which scholars can explore the dimensions of the field and can develop new directions. Further information on the ways in which the WCCES is conducting its work, together with details on the nature of the organisation, can be found in the most updated form from the website: [www.hku.hk/cerc/wcces](http://www.hku.hk/cerc/wcces).

MARK BRAY

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