The Future of Comparative and International Education

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cies.us/newsletter/.../Heyneman.html
discipline as being alive and well at the periphery and dead in the center (Heyneman, 1993). Though taken as controversial, it was simply parallel to what Foster had earlier argued when he pointed out that the bulk of those who practice comparative education do not hold that it is a discipline at all, but rather a part of the sociology of education or economics of education and the like (Foster, 1985, p. 5087). But apparently my comment set off a series of presidential rebuttals, first by Wilson (1994), then by Arnowe (2001) and finally by Biramaiah (2003). Wilson suggested that I may have ignored the rise of a new hybrid of academic practitioner in comparative education, one with on ground experience such as the Peace Corps who uses that experience to promote positive social change. Were I to have replied to Wilson, I might have pointed out my own experience in the Peace Corps and efforts to promote social change wherever I have worked, whether in NGOs, profit-making consultant firms, UN Agencies or universities. In fact, the category of comparative educator which Wilson thinks I left out, could have been myself.

Arnowe points out that there are three different categories of comparative education specialists: those who promote a theoretical dimension, those who promote an ameliorative dimension, and those who promote an international global dimension, such as world peace (Arnowe, 2001). Were I to have replied, I would have pointed out the similarity in categories two and three in terms of motive and the fact that some individuals can be in all three categories. I might also have raised Foster's original point on whether an explicit political agenda is a legitimate part of an academic discipline.

institutions man has created have a coercive component. That, he said, is the meaning of legitimate authority. To suggest that schools are an agency of conformity is 'platitudinous.' Lastly, the alternative to schools is never laid out in detail by the 'deschoolers.' Foster suggests that were deschoolers in charge they would merely substitute the inequalities of schools for a system of differentiation which 'would itself be even more invidious' (Foster, 1971).

Several neo-Marxist commentators criticized Foster's views. In his reply he pointed out that tackling problems through revolutionary action treats all other reforms as though they were only tinkering with social engineering and were doomed to failure. In contrast, Foster suggests that it is perfectly possible that a measure of social development can be achieved through pragmatic means. He suggests that Martin Carnoy believes in freedom only so long as the choices people make agree with his own value orientations. Carnoy's idea of 'false consciousness' really means that people don't agree with him (Foster, 1975)

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Recent Debates in CIES

This year Steven Klees suggested a plethora of fields and perspectives as being a necessity for a Comparative Education curriculum. These include: participatory research, action research, feminist research, Indigenous research, critical ethnography and race research. All of these orientations were useful when studying dependency, world systems, neomarxism, progressive economic theory, economic reproduction theory, cultural reproduction theory, resistance theory, feminist, gender and development, socialist feminist theory, critical race, queer theory, critical postmodern, post-structural and postcolonial theories, and theories of critical pedagogy (Heyneman, 2008).

As surprising as it may be, however, this 'dog's breakfast' of a curriculum is not the main source of the Comparative Education problem. The main problem is the same as in the past. Theorists, policy-makers and practitioners are treated as if their worlds were dominated by single interests. Biraimah bemoans the domination of conservative opinion in popular education journals such as The Chronicle of Higher Education (Biraimah, 2003 p. 427). Klees divides scholars into categories of good and bad (Klees, speech) and believes economics can be divided into two camps: liberal and neo-liberal (Klees article).

These divisive ways of looking at the wider world by comparative educators are inaccurate (Heyneman and Anderson 2008). But more importantly, they serve to underscore the impression that Comparative Education is a field dominated by the naive and powerless. The wider world treats these calls to arms as naive because they do an injustice to complexity. For instance, there are many kinds of policy-makers. There are policy-makers in domestic OECD countries such as Japan and the US; there are policy-makers within middle income countries such as China, Russia, South Africa and Brazil and there are policy makers in aid agencies and NGOs concerned with the allocation of free or highly-subsidized resources. These policy-makers have very different interests, but one thing is for certain: none are interested in the dog's breakfast of perspectives listed above as being essential for a Comparative Education curriculum.

The key issue is the dilemma in our field. The more explicit the political purpose of the scholar the less useful to policy-makers and practitioners they will be. If scholars are not useful they will not be relevant. If scholars from one particular field are perceived as being concerned with irrelevant topics, the field will make little impact on policy. The real issue is not the divide between theorists and practitioners but the divide between those with relevant skills and those without them. Brock-Utne may feel strongly that the policies of international agencies have 're-colonized' the African mind and that the theories of Julius Nyerere concerning education for self-reliance should be re-instilled (Brock-Utne, 2000), but no voting Tanzanian would agree with her. The demand from policy-makers in Tanzania, as well as many other nations, concerns how to achieve better efficiency and higher equity. There are comparative educators who have an impact in these areas. Carnoy's work for instance and I hope my own work have helped to re-think the claims of the proponents of vouchers and school choice (Carnoy, 1998; Heyneman, 1997).

There is a guiding principle which determines the degree of relevance in work on Comparative Education, and that is the degree to which it appears to respond to questions of practitioners and policy-makers. It may be particularly helpful if those policy-makers are domestic as well as international. For instance, international information has been helpful to outline future roles for the US federal government (Heyneman, 2007; Lykins and Heyneman, 2008), on the future of international education statistics (Heyneman and Lykins, 2008; Smith and Heyneman, 2008), cies.us/.../Heyneman_part2.html
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on international experiences with school choice (Heyneman, 2008), and on the improvement of international education agencies (Heyneman and Pelczar, 2005; Heyneman, 1999; 2003; 2005). These issues and topics seem to be in high demand by local policy-makers and in my view constitute illustrations of utility in comparative education.

Comparative Education at Vanderbilt.

In two ways comparative education at Vanderbilt has defined itself differently than other comparative education programs. Though Foster once pointed out that there is a traditional divergence between ‘those who perceive the study of problems in other nations as being directly rooted in the need for improvement in policy and practice and others whose concerns have focused on basic research designed to analyze the comparative functions of formal systems’ (Foster, 1992, 197), at Vanderbilt these have been combined. The organizing principle is derived not from the imagination of theorists but by the priorities determined by policy and practice. Course content is decided on the basis of questions which arise from ministers of education, from school teachers, from policy analysts and parents. If it is considered to be a problem in the eyes of these groups it becomes relevant to our course of study.

Second, at Vanderbilt comparative education is not treated in isolation from questions of education policy more generally. Although it is interesting to study problems of school attendance in Malawi, this does not constitute an issue of sufficient interest to justify itself to students in a top American graduate program. Instead comparative education at Vanderbilt is integrated with training for higher education management and with school administration within the US. Theories and problems emanating from domestic sources are considered to be important foci for anyone studying comparative education.

Students of Comparative Education must take the same methodology courses as the PhD students in other fields. They have to be just as rigorous in their knowledge and use of empirical reasoning. Moreover, Comparative Education has been identified as one of four core required courses for every doctoral candidate. The other courses include Economics, Sociology and Political Science. No other American graduate school requires students of domestic education policy and programs to study comparative education. Because it is not isolated but rather designed to fit the needs of all graduate students, the content of the comparative education courses adhere to specific criteria. Among them:

- The information must provide a wider laboratory on which to observe the consequences of different domestic policies and practices. Examples include important debates over school choice, performance pay, and national testing.

- By studying the challenges and successes of other parts of the world the information should help define what is realistic in terms of domestic education policy. For instance, access standards to higher education in Europe is approaching that of the US, one question which arises is how European universities now handle low performing students and whether their programs have domestic application.

- Comparative education should introduce concepts which may have been overlooked domestically. For instance, by studying the federal role in education in Germany, Australia and Canada students at Vanderbilt are better able to assess the kinds of education policies appropriate not just to central governments but to central governments in a federal structure.

- The comparative education information should raise important questions or challenge long-held assumptions which may not have been questioned using domestic sources of information alone. For instance, classes at Vanderbilt take time to analyze school achievement by children of wealthy and poor families in different parts of the world and to better understand the degree to which findings from the U.S. are universal.

- Comparative education information should elicit results which were not anticipated but nevertheless have high value. For instance, by studying curricula from other nations, Americans are able to better understand that curricula in math and the sciences often lacked depth and sufficient reinforcing mechanisms.

Comparative education courses are organized differently for different students. The EdD course is application-
The Future of Comparative and International Education is oriented and geared toward those who will be senior managers. The PhD course is theory oriented and geared for those who will be new academic leaders. All doctoral courses follow the characteristics mentioned above. Current courses in Comparative and International Education cover seven topics, each is believed to be essential for all future scholars and policy managers in education. Here are the topics:

- **Education and its purposes** The origins of public education are reviewed including the history of why nation states sponsor public schools. It includes a discussion of the mechanisms by which a common experience and philosophy manifest themselves, and current challenges to their success.

- **Education and human capital** This includes a review of the economic principles for making investments in human capital and the evidence of the effectiveness of those investments. Unlike courses in economics, the comparative education discussion includes the politics of economic policy implementation (see below).

- **Choice, efficiency and professionalism** This covers international issues of school effects and whether findings from the United States and other OECD countries can be generalized. It includes issues of what makes a difference in terms of school effects and debates over demand versus supply side policy interventions. Because comparative education information includes school effects from developing as well as OECD countries the variation in effect is considerably greater than within the US alone, hence because they are global, the discussions of 'what works' is more fruitful.

- **The nature of international education statistics** This is a review of the political history of international education statistics over the last thirty years and their future. It is important for all education policy makers to know where international education statistics come from and their problems.

- **The role of international comparisons in education policy.** This discussion covers the use of international tests of academic achievement and the debates surrounding their use across countries.

- **The politics of education policy analysis.** This discussion covers the use of scientific (usually economic) models and the implications of their application to public policy. It concentrates on the debate over basic and higher education in international development as an illustration of how evidence-based policy can backfire politically.

- **The role of education in international trade and education philanthropy.** This discussion includes questions of foreign aid, international targets for achieving Education-For-All, the global growth in the for-profit education industry and the issues of how education should be treated by the U.S. and other countries through the World Trade Organization.

**Summary**

Debates over the content and purpose are traditional in our field. At the same time, demand for information on comparative education is increasing globally. Domestic education officials both in Japan and in the US want to know how to improve the quality of local education. They want to know whether teacher performance pay works in Britain. They want to know if school children in Atlanta are more creative because they do not have shadow education.

What is different between Japan and the United States is the source for comparative education information. In Japan this information comes largely from Comparative and International Educators. In the United States it comes from education experts who are not necessarily affiliated with international education. In essence, the field of comparative education in the US is not at the center of supplying information on schools and universities internationally. As a field it is on the periphery.

I believe that this tendency to bypass comparative and international educators for international information is a problem for our field. One way our field can change this is to supply the kind of information which is in demand by administrative authorities and those who have significant and immediate educational problems to solve. This does not
mean one does not challenge the dominant opinion. Nor does this imply that one is 'tainted' because of working with powerful authorities. What it does mean is that Comparative and International Education as a field will be sought after as a source of insight on the most important issues rather than as a source of argument over whose perspective is more correct.

References


