Purpose of the Course

This course is intended as an introduction to the field of Comparative Education, including the various academic schools that have emerged and the literature linked to such international organizations as UNESCO and the World Bank. We will also see a film entitled “Comparatively Speaking” which features presidents of the Comparative International Education Society of the USA, including three OISE professors.

The course was developed in the mid-1980s, and first taught in 1986. It has been taught at OISE fairly regularly ever since. It is can be seen as a kind of intellectual history of the field, with the different schools or approaches presented in a roughly chronological way. The intention is to trace changing approaches to Comparative Education research over time, and link debates over methodology to wider debates in the literature of the social sciences. Thus the additional readings are by no means comprehensive or detailed, but suggestive only. The roots of the course go back to the ideas and methodology of Professor Brian Holmes at the University of London Institute of Education, one of the leading figures in the development of the field. The course has been updated and changed a number of times, but the original framework and many of the core readings have been kept, in order to maintain this link to history. For later sessions that have been added in recent years, such as Session 8 on the postmodern challenge, and session 9 on globalization and comparative education, students are encouraged to explore bibliographies in books such as Crossley and Watson, Comparative and International Research in Education: Globalisation, context and difference (2003) or Arno and Torres, Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local (2003).

Students are encouraged to focus their attention on such fundamental questions as the purpose of Comparative Education, the views of social change that underlie different approaches to Comparative Education and the question of what "scientific" methodology entails and whether or not it should be a goal in Comparative Education research. By the end of the course students should have developed their own critical perspective on the literature through careful reading and sustained thought and discussion.

Class Format:

Class sessions will involve brief lectures, discussion of common readings and student presentations from the additional reading list, the list of anthologies or textbooks in the field and/or related readings that have been self selected. Some discussion of plans for term papers can also be accommodated.

Evaluation:

Two short papers (400-600 words or 1-2 typed pages) should be prepared for class presentation and handed in during the term. One of them will be a reflective review of any one of the
comparative education textbooks or anthologies listed below, or a related text with the instructor’s approval, with a focus on how they present the purpose and method of comparative education. This will be due by October 20. The other will be a summary critique of an article or book chosen from the additional reading list or elsewhere, on a topic that is related to the final research paper. These short papers/reviews will make up 30% of the final mark. 70% will be based on a research paper of 3-4,000 words (15-20 typed pages). Students may choose their own topics in consultation with the instructor.

Overview of Course Themes and Topics

Introduction: The Origins and early development of Comparative education
1. The Historical Approach
2. The Positivist Approach
3. Phenomenological, Ethnographic & Narrative Approaches
4. The Problem Approach
5. The Developmental Approach: Neo-Marxism, Dependency Theory and World Order thinking
6. Ideal Types in Comparative Education
7. Comparative Education and the Postmodern Challenge
8. Comparative Education and Globalization
9. International Organizations and Comparative Education
10. A Dialectical Paradigmatic Stance and Mixed Methods in Comparative Education
11. Data Collection and Classification in Comparative Education

Major Influential Books


Bereday, George, Comparative Method in Education [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964],


Bray, Mark, Adamson, Bob and Mason, Mark, Comparative Education Research: Approaches
and Methods (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 2007.)


Gu Mingyuan, Education in China and Abroad: Perspectives from a Lifetime in Comparative Education (Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 2001).


Mundy, Karen, Bickmore, Kathy, Hayhoe, Ruth, Madden, Meggan and Madjidi, Katherine, Comparative and International Education: Issues for Teachers (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, New York: Teachers College Press, 2008)

Noah, H. and Eckstein, M., Towards a Science of Comparative Education [London: MacMillan,
1969.


Schriewer, Juergen, *Discourse Formation in Comparative Education* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003)


**Major Comparative Education Journals**

*Canadian and International Education* (CIE),
*Comparative Education Review* (CER) [USA.],
*Comparative Education* (CE) [UK],
*Compare* [UK]
*International Review of Education* (IRE) [Europe]
*Prospects* (UNESCO)

**Session 1: The Historical Approach to Comparative Education**

**Common Readings**


**Discussion Questions:**

1. Compare and contrast the way in which Hans and Kandel viewed the purposes of Comparative Education.
2. What underlying notions of social change do you find in the historical approach to Comparative Education?
3. Do you find any view of scientific method implicit in the historical school?
4. How has William Cummings applied a historical perspective to his suggested approach to comparative education through what he calls “institutionalism”? How does this enable him
to deal critically with many of the widely accepted views of educational convergence, and the effects of globalization on education systems?

Additional Readings


Session 2: The Positivist Approach to Comparative Education

Common Readings


Discussion Questions:

1. Compare views on the purpose of comparative education in the two positivist approaches to the field presented in the readings.
2. What underlying notions of social change do you find in these approaches?
3. What did Bereday mean by making comparative education "scientific"? How did Noah and Eckstein further develop this move towards being more scientific in method?

4. Explore the progress that has been made in the degree of precision and sophistication in positivist scientific method by following the argument in Baker, Goesling and Letendre. What are the benefits and limitations of this kind of comparative study?

**Additional Readings**


Ma, Xin, “Within-School Gender Gaps in Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy, in


Websites:
http://nces.ed.gov/timms - for the most recent IEA study on achievement in mathematics and science

www.pisa.oecd.org - for an alternative study of educational achievement in OECD countries

Session 3: Phenomenological, Ethnographic and Narrative Approaches to Comparative Education

Common Readings

Discussion Questions

1. What role does language play in King’s approach to comparative education, and how does this contrast with the scientific approach of Noah and Eckstein?

2. What does King see as the purpose of comparative education, and how does this shape the framework he suggests, moving from context to concepts, institutions and operations.

3. Compare the approach to "participant observation" suggested by King with the ethnographic approach suggested by Masemann in her 1982 article? How do they differ in their views of social change?

4. What new elements does narrative methodology bring to comparative education. Why is it seen as particularly important in a period of globalization?

Additional Readings:


Jones, P., Comparative Education: Purpose and Method, [St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1971].


*King, E., Post-Compulsory Education: A New Analysis in Western Europe [London: Sage, 1974]


Stenhouse, Lawrence, "Case Study in Comparative Education: Particularity and Generalization", CE, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1979, pp. 5-10.


Session 4: The Problem Approach to Comparative Education

Common Readings


Discussion Questions
1. What does Holmes see as the purpose of Comparative Education?
2. In what sense does he try to make Comparative Education research "scientific"? How important is critical dualism to this endeavour, in Holmes’ view?
3. What does Holmes mean by a "problem" in education? How does he draw upon the philosophers John Dewey and Karl Popper to define problems and clarify the steps of problem analysis and solution?
4. How does Dewey lay out the problem solving approach as a fundamental method of thought?

Additional Readings


**Session 5: The Developmental Approach to Comparative Education: Neo-Marxism, Dependency and World Order Thinking**

**Common Readings**


**Discussion Questions:**

1. What views of social change lie behind the dependency approach to comparative education? What problems does it bring to the fore for consideration?
2. How far might comparative research within this framework claim to be scientific, and on what basis?
3. Which aspects of the dependency framework does McLean find helpful, and which does he suggest may be misguided? Do you agree?
4. What elements in Galtung's suggestions for peaceful research open up the possibility of positive action in relation to global inequalities? How does his approach differ from the classical dependency/world systems analysis, with its basis in Marxism?

**Additional Readings**


*Carnoy, Martin, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* [New York: MacKay, 1974]


**Session 6: Ideal Types in Comparative Education Research**

**Common Readings**

Discussion Questions

1. How does Weber define the "ideal type"?
2. What is its importance with reference to problems of scientific method?
3. How could it be used within different approaches to social change?
4. How is it applied to Comparative Education research by Lauwerys and Holmes?

Additional Readings


Session 7: Comparative Education and the Postmodern Challenge

Common Readings:

Discussion Questions

1. How does Val Rust explain the emergence of postmodernism? What key concepts does he identify and how does he see their relevance to comparative education? What cautions does he suggest for doing comparative education within a postmodern framework?

2. How are metanarratives viewed in “Redeeming Modernity”? To what extent can a self-conscious use of them be a means of listening to, rather than dominating, other discourses?

3. How does Gu Mingyuan, China’s best known comparativist, see the importance of modernisation for China, and what possibilities does he see in China’s cultural traditions for China’s own educational development, and for the global community?

Additional Readings


**Session 8 Comparative Education and Globalization**

**Common Reading:**


Chapter 4: Globalisation, context and difference, pp. 50-69.


**Additional Readings**


*Green, Andy, “Education, globalization and the role of comparative research”, 2003 (?)


Please make your own further selection from the rich bibliography in Crossley and Watson’s book, pp. 143-171.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do the authors of this volume see the reconceptualisation of comparative education as urgent?
2. What three approaches to globalisation do they identify, and which informs their thinking and suggestions for comparative education?
3. What new challenges to research do they see arising from the impact of globalisation?
Session 9: International Organisations and Comparative Education

Common Readings

Discussion Questions
1. What kind of picture does Elise Boulding give of the potential role UNESCO and other UN agencies might play in the global community? What understanding of social change and culture underlies this vision? What radical changes have taken place in the world community since the publication of this volume?
2. What have been the main contributions and problems associated with the World Bank's involvement in financing educational development according to Jones? What is his assessment of the contemporary role of the World Bank?
3. How does the analysis of Mundy and Murphy illustrate the role of comparative education in clarifying possibilities for action on the part of educators in an increasingly globalized world? Are there similarities with Boulding’s vision? Differences?
4. How is this approach different from the developmental approach outlined earlier?
5. What different constraints and opportunities face university scholars and their professional associations in doing Comparative Education research and teaching? What kind of relationship between universities and international organizations would you see as optimal?

Additional Readings


**Session 10: Mixed Methods in Comparative Education**

a. Mixed Methods as a Methodology  
b. Paradigms in Mixed Methods  
c. Research Design Considerations in Mixed Methods  
d. Relevance and application of Mixed Methods to Comparative Education  
e. A Dialectic Paradigmatic Stance: An Example from Thesis Research

**Required Readings:**

**Additional Readings:**

**Questions for Discussion:**
1. What is mixed methods research? Describe the different ways in which it can be a method, a research design and a methodology.
2. How would you define paradigms in research? What are examples of the paradigms that have been proposed for mixed methods research? Discuss the controversies and debates about paradigms in mixed methods.
3. What are some of the mixed methods research designs that are proposed by Creswell?
4. Referring to Bray & Thomas’ (1995) paper, how might mixed methods be applicable to research in comparative education? What are other examples where mixed methods may be considered?
4. How would you evaluate the rigour or validity of a mixed methods study in comparative education?

Session 11: The Collection and Classification of Data in Comparative Education

Common Readings


Discussion Questions

1. Why is a good taxonomy necessary and important for cross-national educational research?
2. What makes it highly problematic?
3. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various possible taxonomic approaches suggested in Holmes and Robinson?
4. What are some of the dilemmas arising from the new and highly sophisticated sets of educational indicators recently developed and used by OECD countries? How do they differ from UNESCO statistics, and what do Cusso and D’Amicob mean by their distinction between comparatism and comparativism?
5. Explore any one set of international educational statistics, UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank or others and consider their usefulness for comparative education research.

Readings Relating to differing Educational Taxonomies


International Bureau of Education (Geneva) and UNESCO (Paris), The International Yearbook of Education, 1948 to the present, with some gaps. Website: http://www.uis.unesco.org/


Postlethwaite, Neville (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Comparative Education and National Systems


The World Bank Development Report (not all statistics are accessible free on-line, but see the following website for one interesting set: http://genderstats.worldbank.org/eoutcomes.pdf)