

## The Case for Including Comparative and International Educations in Teacher Education Programmes

Charl C. Wolhuter  
North-West University, South Africa

**ABSTRACT** Comparative Education has been described as having an unusually wide terrain, ever expanding. Despite this ceaseless expansion, one aspect that has been eschewed by Comparative Education scholars is the teaching of Comparative Education. Yet, as Erwin Epstein (2011) stated at the inception of the CIES-SIG on the Teaching of Comparative Education, “I can think of no other facet of Comparative Education more pivotal for the future of the field, than the teaching of Comparative Education”. The teaching of Comparative International Education at Universities depends on the place of the field in undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs. This paper focuses on how practitioners can market their fields for inclusion in such programs. The paper commences with a literature survey of current published literature on the teaching of Comparative and International Education. The body of published literature on the teaching of Comparative Education, falls into three major parts, namely a eight articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* in the almost six decades of the existence of that journal, three editions of a book on Comparative Education at universities worldwide, and a series of articles on students’ expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses. The paper then surveys trends in teacher education programs, and found that the long term trend of changing teacher education programmes from a basic grounding in the sub-disciplines of Education to training students in a set of skills or techniques deemed necessary for being a teacher, akin to the training of Tradespeople, has had a very pernicious effect on the place of Comparative and International Education in teacher education programmes. The paper recommends how practitioners of the field can muster for strengthening the place of the field in teacher education programmes.

*Keywords:* Comparative education, programme, teacher education

## Introduction

Comparative Education has been described as an ever expanding and broadening (in terms of themes studied, methods and paradigms employed, objectives pursued and functions fulfilled) (Wolhuter, 2014). This statement also applies to Comparative and International Education in teacher education programmes, where the list of relevance and significance of the field seems to be interminable. Thus far Comparative and International Education scholarship has eschewed attention to the teaching of the field. Yet as Erwin Epstein (2011) put it at the founding meeting of the Teaching of Comparative Education SIG (Special Interest Group) of the CIES (Comparative and International Education Society), at the 2010 CIES conference in Chicago, “I can think of no other aspect of the field more pivotal for its future, then the teaching of it”. In this context, this volume on the teaching of Comparative and International Education is timely. Within this book, the aim of this chapter is to identify the rationale(s) and significance of the field as part of teacher education programmes, in order to assist practitioners of the field to advocate for the inclusion thereof in such programmes. The chapter commences with a survey of scholarly literature on the teaching of Comparative Education, followed by an outline of trends in teacher education, and the place of Comparative Education in teacher education programmes worldwide. The significance of the field of Comparative and International Education is then discussed, and from that basis a case is made out for the inclusion of the field in teacher education programmes.

### **Literature survey: Articles on the teaching of Comparative Education published in the *Comparative Education Review***

The body of published literature on the teaching of Comparative Education, falls into three major parts, namely a series of articles published in the *Comparative Education Review*, three editions of a book on Comparative Education at universities worldwide, and a series of articles on students’ expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses. The last two (the book on Comparative Education at universities worldwide, and the series on articles on students’ expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses are discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter, here articles published in the *Comparative Education Review* will be focused upon.

Since the inception of the *Comparative Education Review*, the top journal in the field, an article on the teaching of Comparative Education has appeared first very regularly, and then with increasing less frequency. In one of the first volumes of the journal, one of the founding fathers of Comparative Education and the first editor of the journal, George ZF Bereday (1958),

published an article entitled "Some methods of teaching Comparative Education". In this article he distinguishes between the area and the problem (thematic) approach in the teaching of Comparative Education, and a combination of the two. He supplies examples of these various approaches from programs which were running at that stage at universities in the United States of America, as well as of textbooks used in such programs. This article was followed up by a number of others in the next issues of the journal. These include Edmund J. King (1959), "Students, Teachers, and Researchers in Comparative Education," Isaac L. Kandel (1961), "A New Addition to Comparative Methodology", Robert Belding "Teaching by Case Method in Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review*, 2 (1958) 31-32; and Anthony Scarangelo (1959) , "The Use of Motion Pictures in Comparative Education".

Then the spate of articles on the teaching of Comparative Education came to an end. Only seven years later, two other eminent comparativists of the 1960s, Harold J. Noah and M.A. Eckstein (1966) published another article in the *Comparative Education Review*, entitled "A design for teaching Comparative Education". In this they reflect on their recent teaching of a Comparative Education course to graduate students at Teachers College, Columbia University and Queens College, City University of New York. They contrasted their teaching of Comparative Education in the mould of the positivist social science paradigm of Comparative Education in the 1960s, i.e. teaching students about the relations between education and social phenomena. This stood in contrast to the old teaching which focused on the description of foreign systems of education and at most interpreting foreign systems of education from their societal contexts. Noah and Eckstein proposed a new method of teaching, namely that of hypothesis testing. This entailed the testing of propositions about the relation between education and society. In their view this equips students for fieldwork after completion of their studies, when they can put Comparative Education into use (for example when they are engaged in foreign aid projects). In their articles they also discussed the textbook which they used and enumerated the topics they included in their course.

After another four years Eckstein (1970) once again published an article "On teaching Comparative Education". In this article he pleads for the teaching of Comparative Education and the research methodology of Comparative Education not to be treated as two separate entities, but to become a functional whole. He distinguished between the teaching of Comparative Education at beginner or pre-graduate level, where there is merit for the teaching of foreign education systems, in a descriptive manner, and advanced, post-graduate courses, where, linking up with his thesis in his 1966 article (explained above) and to the theme of his then recently published book, *Toward a Science of Comparative Education* (1969) (in which he and

co-author Harold Noah propagated the wholesale use of the natural science research method for Comparative Education research) he advocated teaching students to do Comparative Education research in a positivistic manner, by hypothesis testing.

Another five years down the line Merle L. Borrowman (1975) published her paper entitled “Comparative Education in teacher education programs”. In this article she attempts to answer the question as to if the inclusion of Comparative Education makes for a better teacher. Since no research had been done on this, according to Borrowman, she could only express a considered and motivated opinion. She argues that a thoughtful exploration in depth of the way different human communities socialize and educate could provide not only a substantial core for General Education but could also at least significantly sensitize potential teachers to the most important pedagogical issues. However, given the many competing demands of various scholarly fields of Education for a place in teacher training programs in the United States of America (as the first two articles, Borrowdale’s article limits its periscope to the United States of America) it is unlikely that Comparative Education will secure a firm place and large space in teacher education programs at most universities. Yet she also express severe doubt that student teachers who get a one semester exposure to Comparative Education (in the optimistic scenario that their program will include a semester course on Comparative Education) will profit significantly from such a course. The pessimistic tone of the article is continued when she draws attention to the – at that stage just beginning of—the performance or competency-based model of teacher education and how ominous that boded for the future of Comparative Education in teacher education programs in the United States of America. She concludes with the suggestion that comparativists should look wider than teacher education programs to find a niche for Comparative Education in university programs.

A full twenty-one years lapsed before the next—and the last, before the articles on this topic dried up completely. In contrast to the previous articles, which exclusively focused on the United States of America, Leon Tickly and Michael Crossley (2001), in their article “Teaching Comparative and International Education: A framework for analysis” took mainly the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent South Africa, Tanzania, Australia and Papua New Guinea as their framework of analysis. According to them, at that stage the debate on the teaching of Comparative Education centred around the question as to whether Comparative and International Education should be taught integrated in other courses of Education, or in separate courses/programs. They argued that rather than portraying the future of comparative and international education in terms of a simple dichotomy—continued specialization or integration—it is more helpful to open the debate further and locate it within a broader analysis of the changing nature and context of university

teaching and, in particular, of courses offered at the advanced studies level of continuing professional development. In so doing, they propose a third approach, which they call the transformative approach.

They criticize the historical way of teaching Comparative Education in British universities as a study of national systems of education and contend that the contemporary challenge to the national focus of educational systems brought about by globalization that may now require a fundamental reappraisal of the nature and role of both mainstream educational studies and comparative and international education—and of Comparative and International education teaching itself. They drew attention to the changing context of teaching of Comparative and International Education at British universities. This changing context include the phenomenon of globalization, and the resultant convergence of education policies and practices worldwide, students seeking continuing professional development rather than initial professional education (and therefore Comparative and International Education courses need to be made relevant to the needs of these students seeking continuing professional development) making an ever larger percentage of the student body of universities, the internationalization of universities and the rise of transnational campuses and programs, meaning students who need a new and different curriculum (than the traditional one). The integration and specialization models Tikly and Crossley see as complementary rather than as mutually excluding each other and being in a state of competition with each other; but the debate about the teaching of Comparative Education should rather centre around the issues raised above—the transformative model of teaching Comparative and International Education.

### **Trends in teacher education**

This section surveys various issues in teacher education worldwide, with the intention to, at the end, identify a place or potential place for Comparative and International Education in teacher education. It is based on insights gained by the author in his work as co-editor, on the *International Handbook on Teacher Education Worldwide* (eds, KG Karras & CC Wolhuter, 2010, Athropos Press, Athens).

#### *Site of teacher education*

Teacher education became a distinguishable part of education systems in the nineteenth century, with the development of normal schools—secondary schools to which a few senior levels/grades were added with the purpose of educating teachers. Later teacher training colleges came into being. In the course of time first secondary school teacher education and later also primary school teacher education migrated to universities.

Lately, in recent decades, there has been a movement back to the school as site of teacher training. This trend is perceivable in two movements. Firstly practice teaching is becoming (time and credit-wise) an ever more important component of teacher education, secondly school-based or site-based education (where student teachers work full-time as teacher assistants in schools and do their theoretical education part-time by means of distance education or mixed-education mode courses) is a growing phenomenon in several countries.

### *Objectives of teacher education*

The goals of teacher education vary from time to time and from place to place. In some instances specified goals lay emphasis upon the individual, i.e. the student teacher in training. In a second set of instances the focus is on the education system: either the preservation of the existing education system, or using teacher education as instrument to create a new education system. In a third set of cases the stress falls upon society, again, either the preservation of the existing, or the use of teacher education in order to create a new envisioned society.

### *Roles for which teachers are prepared*

The roles for which teachers are prepared have also changed during the course of history. Pre-1990 university teacher education gave student teachers a liberal education, i.e. a teacher equipped to take his/her own decisions—one of the hallmarks of a professional person—rather than a person whose working day consists of carrying-out the dictates of superiors of a hierarchy. Post-1990 teacher education saw the degeneration of teacher education from a professional person to a labourer forced to fit the straight-jacket of narrowly-defined and prescribed roles.

### *Content*

The two broad categories of (theoretical) content included in teacher education programmes are that of academic knowledge and that of professional knowledge. Professional knowledge was historically organised and presented in terms of the part-disciplines of Education, i.e. Philosophy of Education, History of Education, Educational Psychology, Sociology of Education and Comparative Education. With the shift in the roles for which teachers are prepared, course content has changed—especially the professional component but increasingly the academic component too—from a thorough grounding into the sub-disciplines of Education, to training the student-

teacher in a checklist of techniques, which he/she will need as a teacher, much akin to the training of tradespeople or technicians.

### *Method*

The methods employed in teacher education have moved along with changes in the site of teacher education, and with technological development. Technological progress and the rise in prominence of the school as site of teacher education, resulted in the video, the radio, the television, the mobile telephone, and the internet increasing in prominence, and the lecture and the textbook being no longer so dominant.

### *Duration*

The duration of teacher education has increased over time, from times when (primary) teacher education programmes were part of senior secondary school programmes (in the normal schools) to teacher education in the European Union (and in some states in the United States of America, such as Ohio), where it takes a Masters degree (i.e. five years of university study) to qualify as a teacher.

### *Control*

In the first normal schools the teacher-educator probably had a strong influence. Teacher training colleges fell heavily under the power of education departments/ministries. At universities, in turn, teacher education programmes were structured by the academic profession. An ominous trend of the current age is that of governments increasingly prescribing teacher education programmes, part of an international trend of ever more governmental curtailment of university autonomy and academic freedom.

### *Teacher education educators*

There is a long-standing and wide-spread phenomenon that academics from other fields look down towards academics attached to Schools/Faculties of Education as being quasi-academics or being inferior. Education Faculties/academics too, compared to their counterparts in other areas, get a raw deal when it comes to resource allocation, be it buildings, library allocations, research funding, etc.

### *Multiculturalism*

The reality of increasingly multicultural societies worldwide necessitates the inclusion of multicultural and intercultural education in teacher education programmes. This entails not only knowledge of other cultures and their cultural heritage, but is also a matter of attitude and disposition: of creating intercultural sensitivity.

### *Internationalisation and regionalisation*

Globalisation, the information and communications technology revolution and an increasingly mobile global population create the imperative for an even stronger international dimension in teacher education programmes. Related to the imperative of internationalisation, is that of regionalisation, especially where the economic, political, cultural and educational forces of regional integration are the strongest, e.g. in the European Union.

### *Indiginisation*

At the other end there is also an imperative for the indiginisation of teacher education, i.e. establishing teacher education programmes in mode and content and organisation consonant with national, even local contexts. This need is especially salient in the countries of the Global South.

### *In-service education and training*

In line with the present philosophy of lifelong learning, globally impressive policies regarding the continual professional development of teachers are being formulated. However, there exists a large gap between rhetoric and reality, as these policies on in-service education and training just cannot off the ground.

### *A place for Comparative and International Education?*

On the basis of many of the above trends, a case can be made out for inclusion and strengthening of Comparative Education in teacher education programmes, either to support salutary developments in teacher education, or to counteract objectionable trends. Concerning the site of teacher education, and the university's place therein; the university is an institution of advanced scholarship and professional education, to train teachers for a set of (narrowly circumscribed) roles or to equip teachers with a set of techniques to use in teaching only, is hardly consonant with the image of a *profession*



with asks from the teacher to become acquainted with the (national) education system in which he/she functions, interrelationships between education and society (such as the role of education in national or economic development, or the influence of the social system as a shaping force of education, etc.). To form a substantiated view of education matters, and to take autonomous decisions in the classroom, mean a teacher has to be knowledgeable of many things outside the classroom that have a bearing on what happen inside the classroom—national and global societal and education trends.

### **Comparative Education at Universities**

While the field of Comparative and International Education has had a very divergent trajectory and still present chequered geography at universities globally, the following phases, which Larsen *et al.* (2013) distinguish in the history of Comparative Education at universities in Canada, can be used, and will be used in this chapter as a model depicting the fortunes of the field at universities worldwide:

- i. *The Establishment of Comparative Education:* Comparative Education chairs or positions are established at universities and Comparative Education courses are instituted.
- ii. *The Fragmentation and/or Dissolution of Comparative Education:* Comparative Education chairs and positions are abolished or not refilled, and Comparative Education courses are either cancelled or severely reduced.
- iii. *The Broadening of Comparative Education.* The teaching of Comparative Education is broadened in higher education. While there are fewer Comparative Education courses, there are increasing numbers of education courses with a comparative and international education focus or theme.

#### ***Phase I The establishment of Comparative Education***

In the spring of 1900, James E. Russell taught the first ever course in Comparative Education at Columbia University. In 1908, Isaac Kandel became professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. Following the pace-setting of Isaac Kandel and Peter Sandiford at Teachers' College, both who had studied under Sadler, courses in Comparative Education spread in the United States after 1920. Although there was little growth during the Second World War, after 1945 the field expanded.

The establishment and spread of Comparative Education at universities in Canada largely began in the 1950s with courses taught and programs developed at the University of Toronto, University of Ottawa, University of Brit-

ish Colombia and McGill University. From the 1960s onwards, many new faculties and departments of education were established across the country, with a focus on teacher preparation.

Comparative Education was also established in European universities prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. For example, in Germany, Comparative Education programs had been launched at universities in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Bochum and at Humboldt University in Berlin. In the East the beginnings of the presence of Comparative Education at universities is also discernable in the first half of the twentieth century. Comparative Education was taught at the University of Hong Kong since 1920 and at Beijing Normal University since the 1930s.

### *Phase II The dissolution or fragmentation of Comparative Education*

In the 1970s, continuing throughout the 1980s Comparative Education courses and academics who were full-time comparativists began to disappear at North American universities, followed by Europe since the 1980s. A number of factors contributed to this trend. First, demographic trends influenced higher education. Declining university enrollments meant that programs not considered essential were the first to be eliminated. In particular, the decreasing number of student teachers at Western European and North American universities led to the closure of many institutions of teacher education, and corresponding decline of space for Comparative Education. Disillusionment with the unsatisfactory results of investments in education since the 1950s in combination with the economic slump following the 1973 oil crisis meant that many governments, meant declining interest in education (if not outright disillusionment with the societal elevating potential of education). The shift to neo-liberal economics since the early 1980s, and the consequent budget cuts to higher education as a matter of deliberate policy, have meant less money for universities.

### *Phase III The broadening of Comparative Education at universities*

Since the early 1990s, the introduction of courses in which Comparative Education is subsumed, is noticeable at universities in North America and Western Europe. These courses include Globalisation and Education, the Uniformisation of Education in the European Union, Human Rights and Education, Education and Modernisation, and Education and Development. This trend can be attributed to a number of contextual forces. These include the forces of globalisation, the related need for global citizenship education, the formation of supra-national political groupings and its impact on education, such as the European Union and the Lisbon Goals and the Bologna Declaration, the phenomenon of ever increasingly diverse societies and the

need for multicultural and intercultural education, the rise of national testing (such as the PISA, PEARLS or TIMSS) and the competition of nations in the field of education in an increasingly “flat world” ( a term used by Friedman, 2006, to denote the present day globalised world, where whatever advantage geographical location had brought in the past, has been wiped out), the rise of the creed of Human Rights, and global projects such as “Education for All” and the “Millennium Development Goals”.

### *The resilience of Comparative Education*

As a very rough generalisation then Comparative Education at universities in the USA can be said to have gone through a phase of establishment, beginning in the very first year of the twentieth century, picking up momentum after 1920 and reaching a crescendo in the 1960s. This was followed by a phase of contraction in the 1970s and 1980s, to be followed, in turn, by a phase of broadening in the 1990s. This same pattern repeated itself in Canada and Europe, each phase about a decade after the USA. In the far East the pattern is also visible, as it is in Latin America, albeit with a time lag too. In most countries in Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa at least) the first universities were established around the advent of independence, i.e. around 1960, while the university sector began to grow only after 1990. In many universities in Africa, Comparative Education stands strong and is visible in Comparative Education courses.

The above pattern of establishment, followed by fragmentation and ending in broadening is by no means universal and irreversible. In many countries, such as Spain, Greece, most Eastern European countries and China, Comparative Education made a forceful return at universities during recent decades, finding a niche and a *raison d'être* in a new education and social context—proof of the resilience of the field.

### **The significance of Comparative Education**

The reasons, the purposes and the value of the scholarly field of Comparative Education, as noted in the scholarly literature, can be placed under the following rubrics:

description

- understanding/interpretation/explanation
- evaluation
- application
- educational planning
- teaching practice
- in other fields of Educational study
- furthering the philanthropic ideal

### *Description*

The most basic utility of Comparative Education is to describe education systems/learning communities, within their societal contexts, in order to satisfy the yearning for knowledge which is *sui-generis* part of human nature. Bereday (1964:5) puts it that

“The foremost justification for Comparative Education is intellectual. [Humans] study Comparative Education because they want to know”.

### *Understanding: Interpretation/Explanation*

On the next plane Comparative Education also satisfies the need to understand: education systems in learning communities are explained or understood from surrounding contextual forces which shape them. Conversely—if education systems are shaped by the societal matrix in which they are embedded (and if education systems, in turn, shape societies and cultures), then the comparative study of education systems also fosters an understanding of cultures or societies. Noah’s (1986:156-157) thesis of “education as touch stone of society” is relevant here. The value of Comparative Education is very topical in times of multicultural societies and of Intercultural Education.

### *Evaluation*

Thirdly, Comparative Education serves to evaluate education systems (*cf.* Wiseman, 2012: 3) the own education system as well as universal evaluation of education systems. In an age of a competitive globalised world, the evaluation of the domestic education project assumes even bigger importance—hence the proliferation of studies such as the IEA studies the OECD PISA studies, and the international ranking of universities. The universal evaluation entails how well the education systems of the world rise up to the challenges of the twenty-first century world as well as an estimation of the limits and the possibilities of the societal effects of education. Examples of the latter are

- to what extent can education be employed to effect economic growth?
- to what extent can education be used to eradicate unemployment?
- can education effect a democratic culture?
- to what extent does education offer an instrument to effect intercultural tolerance and intercultural sensitivity in a multicultural society?

*Application: Education system planning and reform*

Comparative Education is also used to design a new education system, to plan education, and to reform education systems (*cf.* Watson, 2012: 32; Wiseman, 2012). In reforming or in improving the education system or in grappling with an educational issue, challenge or problem, one country could benefit from the experience of other systems. When a country faces a particular educational issue or problem, a study of the experience of other countries that once had faced the same problem, could reveal the full extent and implications of the problem and possible contributory causes; and could also suggest possible solutions to the problem. An example is Wolhuter's (2003) publication of the illuminative value of the experience of Germany and other countries which attempted a dual vocational education and training system, for South Africa when she embarked upon such a system.

*Application: Improvement of teaching practice*

Recently there have appeared a number of publications proclaiming the value (or potential value) of Comparative Education in assisting the teacher to improve his/her teaching practice (e.g. Bray, 2007:15; Planel, 2008). Comparative Education research can assess the track record of particular teaching methods in particular contents. Not the least significance is the value of assisting to improve teaching practice in multicultural classrooms – as Planel (2008) convincingly shows in her comparative study of pedagogy in English and in French classrooms. Interestingly, research on students' expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses have revealed that students too looked onto Comparative Education courses to assist them with the improvement of their teaching practice (will be elaborated upon the next section).

*Application: Serving other fields of Educational Studies*

Comparative Education is also of use to other fields of Educational scholarship (and even beyond, to related fields of social sciences), e.g. for Philosophy of Education, Comparative Education offers a show-case of the track record of the implementation of various philosophies of education in particular places at particular times in history.

### *The philanthropic ideal*

The original inspiration source of the scholarly field of Comparative Education, the philanthropic ideal of the time of Jullien, remains the most noble cause of Comparative Education. Serving and improving the state of humanity, is in the current age of globalization more urgent than ever—i. a. by nurturing a global citizen, equipped with a creative, critical, caring mindset (*cf.* Scheller & Wolhuter, eds, 2011).

### **Research on students' expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses**

I have coordinated a number of research projects on students' expectations and experiences of Comparative Education courses. These culminated in the article Wolhuter *et al.*, 2011, reporting on research done on this topic in nine countries. The research identified a host of diverse reasons as to why students in various national contexts would want to study Comparative Education, depicting a picture of a dynamic, pliable, ever-rejuvenating field.

In the case of the United States of America, the dominant motive for enrolling in Comparative Education courses is related to international understanding within the context of education as part of international aid. The hierarchy of expectations of the American students might be understood against the background of these students' experience and career plans in international aid. American student expectations may also result from the amount of foreign aid (and education as part thereof) that the United States of America has been engaged in the past half century, ever since the advent of independence of large parts of the Third World, The Cold War, and the Truman Doctrine. In the case of Ireland the most important motivation was to help students to find a job to teach abroad. The Irish student teachers were mainly in there early twenties and intended to teach abroad at some stage of their career. They also indicated that they hoped it would develop their capacities to teach in the newly developing multi-cultural classrooms in Ireland and to also develop their general teaching strategies. The Greek and South African students looked to Comparative Education to illuminate and to guide the domestic education reform project. Both Greece and South Africa has recently become the scene of fundamental societal reconstruction, of which education is not only an integral part, but in which education had been assigned a pivotal instrumental role to bring about. Bulgarian students' expectations, on the other hand, seem to resolve around gaining of fuller knowledge and insight of their own education system. While undergoing societal and educational transformation as South Africa, Bulgaria as a fully fledged member of the erstwhile Eastern Block, never suffered from academ-

ic isolation as South Africa did during the years of the international academic boycott. But the existence of an non-transparent government and political-bureaucratic machinery up to 1990 might have created a yearning to know and to understand their education system better. In contrast to South Africa, Tanzania has long since passed through the post-independence educational and societal reconstruction of the 1960s—a project that bore limited success, and whatever educational reform is currently taking place, takes place within the prescribed fixed parameters of the World Bank Structural Adjustment Programme (which Tanzania had little option but to sign) and the neo-liberal global economic revolution. Tanzanian students therefore have a somewhat more detached (from everyday practice), purely intellectual expectation from Comparative Education courses. Oman has recently commenced to develop a mass education system, therefore Omani students, as their South African and Greek counterparts are interested in the value of Comparative Education to illuminate and to guide domestic educational reform. A unique expectation which transpired among the responses of the Omani students, is that, in a country with one public university, and 5097 students studying abroad (total tertiary enrolment 68154), Comparative Education is seen a means to obtain knowledge of foreign education systems, which will facilitate students to proceed to further (post-graduate) studies abroad. Similarly, among the Thai post-graduate cohort, an interesting expectation was what would assist them in finding an appropriate research design for their theses. Cuban students viewed Comparative Education as a way to gain a fuller understanding of various countries' societies and cultures. Cuban students' expectations could have been shaped by their country's history of using education to create a new society and culture since 1961 (*cf.* Arnove, 1982). They view Comparative Education as revealing how their own as well as other societies and cultures were shaped by education, and how education contributes to the accomplishment of societal goals, such as societal justice.

Upon conclusion of the project, and after having written up the article, I thought that the range of motivations and uses of Comparative Education which emanated from the research exhausted all the possibilities of the uses of the field. Being visiting professor at Brock University, Canada, for the winter semester (January-April) 2012, however, brought yet another relevance of Comparative Education to the fore. I lectured the course: EDUC 5P21: Comparative Education and International Education. This course is limited to international students. Students mainly from Mainland China, but also some from elsewhere in Eastern Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa study this course as a compulsory part of their Masters in Education in Educational Leadership Programme. The entire course EDUC IP521 is built around Western and Chinese ways of thought, of knowledge acquisition and the Western and Chinese views on knowledge. The two textbooks of the EDUC 5P21 course are:

1. R.E.Nisbett. 2003. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently...and why*
2. S.B. Merriam. 2007. *Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing*. Malabar, Fl.: Krieger Publishing Company.

Other courses in the students' programme are: Foundations of Education, Organisation Theory, Research Methodology, School Observation (practicum) and Change Theory. It is obvious that this course in Comparative and International Education serves as an induction for students into Western education, learning styles and epistemology valued in the West, and the exigencies and the philosophical underpinning of Western education. It was clear that the cultural and educational background of these students (Confucian and Maoist, albeit a somewhat modernized/modified form thereof) ill-prepare these students for study at a North American university, and Comparative Education serves as the bridging course. Nisbett (2003) makes a well substantiated case that Western and East Asian cultures differ in their metaphysics, or fundamental beliefs in the nature of the world. Whereas Westerns tend to see change in a linear way, Asians, influenced by the Tao, tend to have an eternal cyclic view of change. Aristotle and Confucius presented two different systems of thought, which laid the basis for respectively the Western and the East Asian conceptualization of the world. For example, whereas Westerners views of the world and their thought processes are heavily influenced by the search for individual identity (essentialism) of objects in the world and approach the world in an analytical mode of thought, East Asians tend to view the world more holistically, placing emphasis on relationships rather than individual identity. Second, their characteristic thought patterns differ, influenced by their respective metaphysical beliefs. Then people use the cognitive tolls to make sense, to attach meaning in the world in which they live in. All these are interrelated with people's attitudes and beliefs, values and preferences. Some of the many other differences between Western and Eastern ways of perceiving the world, as highlighted by Nissbett (2003) include:

- Patterns of attention and perception, with Westerners attending more to objects and Easterners attending more likely to detect relationships among events than Westerners,
- Beliefs about the controllability of the environment, with Westerners believing in controllability more than Easterners,
- Preferred patterns of explanation for events, with Westerners foscusing on objects and Easterners more likely to emphasise relationships,
- Habits of organizing the world, with Westerners preferring categories and Eastererns being more likely to emphasise relationships,



- Application of dialectical approaches, with Easterners being more inclined to seek the Middle Way when confronted with apparent contradictions and Westerners—under the influence of Aristotlean logic—being more inclined to insist on the correctness of one belief vs. Another,
- Debate is almost unknown in Eastern Asia. Negotiation and conflict resolution have different characters in the harmony striving East than in Western Europe,
- For East Asians the world is an interdependent world in which the self is part of a larger whole; Westerners live in a world in which the self is a unitary free agent.

All these have implications with the way people learn (Merriam, 2007: 183) and how they approach an education situation. The Confucian and Mao (or then modernized Mao) cultural background taught East Asians the message that education is teacher centred (*cf.* Merriam, 2007: 185), in vivid contrast to the contemporary Western idea of education as student centred. The Confucian and Maoist idea of education being knowledge handed down by the teacher to be absorbed by the student, the latter not supposed to critically question such sanctified handed down knowledge, is the opposite of the value placed by contemporary Western education upon independent and critical thinking. Merely regurgitating what appears in the literature is condemned in the West as plagiarism. Memorisation plays a much larger and more valued role in Eastern Asian education than in the West (although a number of scholars, such as Biggs, 1996, has cautioned against the distortedly naïve representation of this phenomenon, ie this aspect of East Asian learning, in Western scholarly literature). Nisbett (2003: 74-75) writes: “It is not uncommon for American professors to be impressed by their hard-working, highly selected Asian students and then be disappointed by their first major paper – because of their lack of mastery of the rhetoric common in the professor’s field.

## Conclusion

This chapter commenced with the remark made about the feature of Comparative Education as being an ever expanding field, ceaselessly venturing in new spaces, a field with no outer circumference. In the scholarly literature a long and impressive list of purposes served by this field appear. Furthermore research about what attracts students to the field, what they see in the field has revealed that this field has a significance that is inexhaustible—in every new context where a survey is done among students as to the appeal which Comparative and International Education holds, a new value of and *raison d’être* for the field appears. In contrast to this positive outlook, in large parts of the world Comparative Education as a field has been marginalised a gen-

eration ago, only to appear in a form subsumed in other courses a generation later (broadening phase). When it appears in such a form, there is always the problem that students are not introduced to a body of accumulated knowledge in the field, they are not introduced to the comprehensive body of knowledge of the field, nor to the comparative method and potential of the field, it is then a case of “Comparative Education flowing a mile wide but an inch deep” as Masemann (2008) put it. As outlined above, culminating in a survey of students’ motivations for enrolling in Comparative Education courses, in the current age of globalisation, Human Rights, diverse societies—not to mention the rise of knowledge societies and the increasing colossal proportions of the global education project—Comparative Education is now more indispensable than ever before, in educating teachers for the twenty-first century. To bring home the value of this field, practitioners can do well to first survey their own students’ views on the meaning and value of Comparative Education, then synthesise this with the general purposes of the field as outlined in this chapter; and use that to make a case for Comparative Education to figure strongly in teacher education programmes at their universities. Finally, the handful of articles which have appeared on the topic in the leading journal of the field attest to the low priority which the teaching of Comparative and International Education has on the overall research agenda of the field. Comparativists who have the teaching of the field at heart need to change that. Local research on the value and appeal of Comparative Education should be built into a general theory as to the purposes and objectives of the field. Research on the teaching of Comparative and International Education should develop in tandem with the expansion and progress of the dynamic field of Comparative Education as a whole. That will ensure both the best teaching of Comparative and International Education and the optimal progress of the field.

*Correspondence*

Charl C. Wolhuter  
North-West University  
Potchefstroom Campus  
South Africa  
Email: [Charl.Wolhuter@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Charl.Wolhuter@nwu.ac.za)

## References

- Arnové, R.F. 1982. The Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade 1960. In: Altbach, P.G.; Arnove, R.F. and Kelly, G.P. (eds). *Comparative Education*. New York: Macmillan
- Belding, R. 1958. Teaching by Case Method in Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 2: 31-32;
- Bereday, G.Z.F. 1958. Some Methods of Teaching Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review* 1(3): 4-7.
- Bereday, G.Z.F. 1964. *Comparative Method in Education*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Borrowman, M.L. 1975. Comparative Education in teacher education programs. *Comparative Education Review* 19(3): 354-362.
- Bray, M. 2007. Actors and Purposes in Comparative Education. In: Bray, M.; Adamson, B. and Mason, M. (eds). *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong and Springer: 15-38.
- Eckstein, M.A. 1970. On teaching Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review* 4(3): 275-282.
- Epstein, E.H. 2011. Address at the founding meeting of the Teaching of Comparative Education SIG (Special Interest Group) of the CIES (Comparative and International Education Society), 2010 CIES Conference, Chicago.
- Friedman, T.L. 2006. *The World is Flat: The globalised world in the twenty-first century*. London: Penguin.
- Kandel, I.L. 1961. A New Addition to Comparative Methodology. *Comparative Education Review*, 5: 4-6 ,
- King, E.J. 1959. Students, Teachers, and Researchers in Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 3: 33-36;
- Larsen, M., Majhanovich, S. and Masemann, V. 2013. Comparative Education at Canadian Universities. In: Wolhuter, C., Popov, N., Leutwyler, B. and

- Ermenc, K.S. (eds). *Comparative Education at Universities Worldwide*. Sofia and Ljubljana: Bulgarian Comparative Education Society and Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana: 171-182.
- Masemann, V. 2008. Remark made at the International Conference on Comparative Education and Teacher Education, University of Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria.
- Merriam, S.B. Broadening Our Understanding of Learning and Knowing. In: Merriam, S.B. and Associates. *Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing*. Malabar, Fl.: Krieger Publishing Company.
- Nisbett, R. E. 2003. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently... and Why*. New York: The Free Press.
- Noah, H.J. 1986. The Use and Abuse of Comparative Education. In: Altbach, P.G. and Kelly, G.P. (eds). *New Approaches to Comparative Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 153-165.
- Noah, H.J. and Eckstein, M.A. 1966. A design for teaching Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review* 10(3): 511-513.
- Panel, C. 2008. The rise and fall of comparative education in teacher training; should it rise again as comparative pedagogy? *Compare* 38(4):381-383
- Scarangelo, A. 1959. The Use of Motion Pictures in Comparative Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 3: 24-2.
- Schneller, P.L. and Wolhuter, C.C. (eds). 2011. *Navigating the CO: Creativity, Core, Compassion, Character, Cosmopolitanism and Critical Awareness An Introduction to Comparative Education*. Noordbrug: Keurkopie..
- Tickly, L. and Crossley, M. 2001. Teaching Comparative and International Education: A framework for analysis. *Comparative Education Review* 45(4): 561-580.
- Watson, K. 2012. South-east Asia and Comparative Studies. *Journal of International and Comparative Education* 1(1): 31-39
- Wiseman, A.W. 2012. A Framework for Understanding International Perspectives in Education. In: Popov, N., Wolhuter, C., Leutwyler, B., Hilton, G., Ogunleye, J. and Almeida, P.A. (eds). *International Perspectives on Education*. Sofia: Bulgarian Comparative Education Society: 1-21.

Wolhuter, C.C. 2003. Die beoogde stelsel van tweeledige beroepsonderwys en-opleiding in Suid-Afrika: potensiaalbepaling vanuit 'n vergelykende perspektief. *South African Journal of Education* 23(2):145-151.

Wolhuter, C.C. 2014. Comparative Education: Past, present and future. In: Steyn, H.J. and Wolhuter, C.C. (eds). *The Education System: A Comparative Education perspective*. Noordbrug: Keurkopie: 1-23.

Wolhuter, C.C.; O'Sullivan, M.O.; Anderson, E.; Wood, L.; Karras, K.G.; Mihova, M.; Torres, A; Anangisye, W.A.L.; Maarman, R.F.; Al-Harhi, H. and Thonghew, S. 2011. Students' expectations of and motivations for studying comparative education: A comparative study across nine countries in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. *Educational Research* 2(8): 1341-1355.