SCHOLARLY ENQUIRY AND THE FIELD OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION[1]

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THE field of comparative education is by nature interdisciplinary. This paper comments on the nature of relationships between the field and other domains of academic study.

A useful starting point is a 1989 book written by Tony Becher. It was published in second edition in 2001 under the co-authorship of Tony Becher and Paul Trowler, with the title *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*. Both editions lucidly analysed dimensions of the academic arena, with the second edition extending analysis and updating it to take account of several powerful influences on the size and shape of higher education. Although both editions were primarily concerned with the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), they also had considerable relevance to other countries. The domain of educational studies was given only passing attention in the books, but patterns and trends in educational studies can be mapped against those in other domains fairly easily. This paper is chiefly based on the second edition of the book, together with a sequel edited by Trowler et al. (2012a). The paper also draws on the works of many other scholars, and particularly the conceptual schema presented by Olivera (1988).

Defining Tribes and Mapping Territories

The tribes to which Becher and Trowler referred are academic communities as defined in part by the members of those communities and in part by the institutions which employ them and which locate them in departments, centres or other units. The territories are the academic ideas on which they focus. This includes methodological approaches, subject matter, and modes of discourse.

The subtitle of the book referred to the culture of disciplines. Cultures were defined (Becher & Trowler 2001, p.23) as "sets of taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving, which are articulated through and reinforced by recurrent practices among a group of people in a given context". The primary focus of the book was on "practitioners in a dozen disciplines whose livelihood it is to work with ideas … [which] lend themselves to sustained exploration, and which form the subject matter of the disciplines in question".

This statement raises a question about the definition of disciplines. Many authors (e.g. Furlong & Lawn 2011; Manzon 2011) have noted that the concept of an academic discipline is not altogether straightforward. Becher and Trowler (2001, p.41) also recognised the point, observing that:

There may be doubts, for example, whether statistics is now sufficiently separate from its parent discipline, mathematics, to constitute a discipline

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ПОРІВНЯЛЬНА ОСВІТА

on its own. The answer will depend on the extent to which leading academic institutions recognize the hiving off in terms of their organizational structures (whether, that is, they number statistics among their fully-fledged departments), and also on the degree to which a freestanding international community has emerged, with its own professional associations and specialist journals.

Nevertheless, Becher and Trowler asserted (p.41) that “people with any interest and involvement in academic affairs seem to have little difficulty in understanding what a discipline is, or in taking a confident part in discussions about borderline or dubious cases”.

Within these parameters, various disciplinary groupings have different characteristics. Table 1 presents a classification into four categories based on a hard/soft and pure/applied matrix. The boundaries are not sharp, but the classification is nevertheless useful. The table places education in the soft-applied category, describing it as functional and utilitarian, and “concerned with enhancement of [semi-] professional practice”. This contrasts with the hard-pure sciences, for example, which are described as cumulative and atomistic, and concerned with universals, quantities and simplification.

Table 1.

Disciplinary Groupings and the Nature of Knowledge

Disciplinary groupings	**Nature of knowledge**
Pure sciences (e.g. physics): ‘hard-pure’	Cumulative; atomistic (crystalline/tree-like); concerned with universals, quantities, simplification; impersonal, value-free; clear criteria for knowledge verification and obsolescence; consensus over significant questions to address, now and in the future; results in discovery/ explanation.
Humanities (e.g. history) and pure social sciences (e.g. anthropology): ‘soft-pure’	Reiterative; holistic (organic/river-like); concerned with particulars, qualities, complication; personal, value-laden; dispute over obsolescence; lack of consensus over significant questions to address; results in understanding/appreciation.
Technologies (e.g. mechanical engineering, clinical medicine): ‘hard-applied’	Purposive; pragmatic (know-how via hard knowledge); concerned with mastery of physical environment; applies heuristic approaches; uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches; criteria for judgement are purposive, functional; results in products/techniques.
Applied social science (e.g. education, law, social administration): ‘soft-applied’	Functional; utilitarian (know-how via soft knowledge); concerned with enhancement of [semi-] professional practice; uses case studies and case law to a large extent; results in protocols and procedures.

Source: Becher & Trowler (2001), p.36.

Becher and Trowler also distinguished between emphases in disciplines by framing an analogy between urban and rural ways of life (p.106):

[We] may liken specialisms which have a high people-to-problem ratio to urban areas, and those with a low one to rural areas. In the first, there is alongside a densely concentrated population a generally busy – occasionally frenetic – pace of life, a high level of collective activity, close competition for space and resources, and a rapid and heavily used information network. By and large, the rural scene, though it may offer frenetic and competitive moments, occasions for communal and involvement and a potential for spreading rumour and gossip like wildfire, displays the opposite characteristics.

In this categorisation, urban and rural specialisms differ not only in the communication patterns but also in the nature and scale of the problems on which their inhabitants are engaged, in the relationships between those inhabitants, and in the opportunities they have for attracting resources. Urban researchers typically select narrow areas of study, containing discrete and separable problems, while their rural counterparts commonly cover a broader stretch of intellectual territory in which the problems are not sharply demarcated or delineated. Competition in urban life can become intense, even cut-throat: an all-out race to find the solution to what is seen as a seminal problem. In rural life it makes more sense to adopt the principle of division of labour – there are plenty of topics, so there is no point in tackling one on which someone else is already engaged. Teamwork is another feature more common in urban than rural settings. Publications in urban fields are typically short and have multiple authors and rapid turn-around times. In rural areas, authors commonly wait over a year, and sometimes considerably longer, for their articles to appear. Books are more important in rural disciplines than in urban ones.

While many of these features are durable, the decades have brought what Becher and Trowler (2001, p.xiii) called “major geomorphic shifts”. These shifts have continued significantly during the present century to such an extent that Trowler et al. (2012b, p.257) at least partly agreed with Manathunga and Brew (2012) that the metaphor of tribes and territories might usefully be changed, e.g. to focus on oceans which have tides and in which “spaces 'flow' into each other, merging to form different times of knowledge groupings as problems and needs arise” (Manathunga & Brew 2012, p.51). Yet whatever the metaphor, most analysis would agree that important changes include the increasingly intrusive role of the state, demands for performance, and an increasing need for academics to 'chase the dollar'. The demands of funding bodies have changed the nature of the products produced by academics, and Research Assessment Exercises and similar schemes have extended processes of accountability and heightened anxieties within the academic world. These changes have affected education, including comparative education, alongside other fields.

Education, and Comparative Education, in Relation to Other Domains of Enquiry

Although Table 1 explicitly names education as inhabiting a disciplinary territory, its disciplinary basis is not undisputed. The field of education does have departments, degrees and specialist journals, but its intellectual substance tends to draw on other disciplines and rather rarely to assert distinctive characteristics which are unique to the study of education (Furlong & Lawn 2011).

If it is doubtful whether the whole domain of education could be considered a discipline, it is even more doubtful whether comparative education could be considered one. A few people have described comparative education as a discipline (e.g. Youngman 1992; Higginson 2001; Wolhuter & Popov 2007), but most see it as a field which welcomes scholars who are equipped with tools and perspectives from other arenas and who choose to focus on educational issues in a comparative context (Manzon 2011). Such a view has been presented for example by Lê Thành Khôi (1986, p.15), who described comparative education as “a field of study covering all the disciplines which serve to understand and explain education”.

Olivera has examined this matter in more detail in a pair of works. The account below draws chiefly on his 1988 foundational paper which he elaborated two decades later in a volume written in Spanish (Olivera 2009). First, he noted (1988, p.174), most knowledge of a scientific level about education consists:

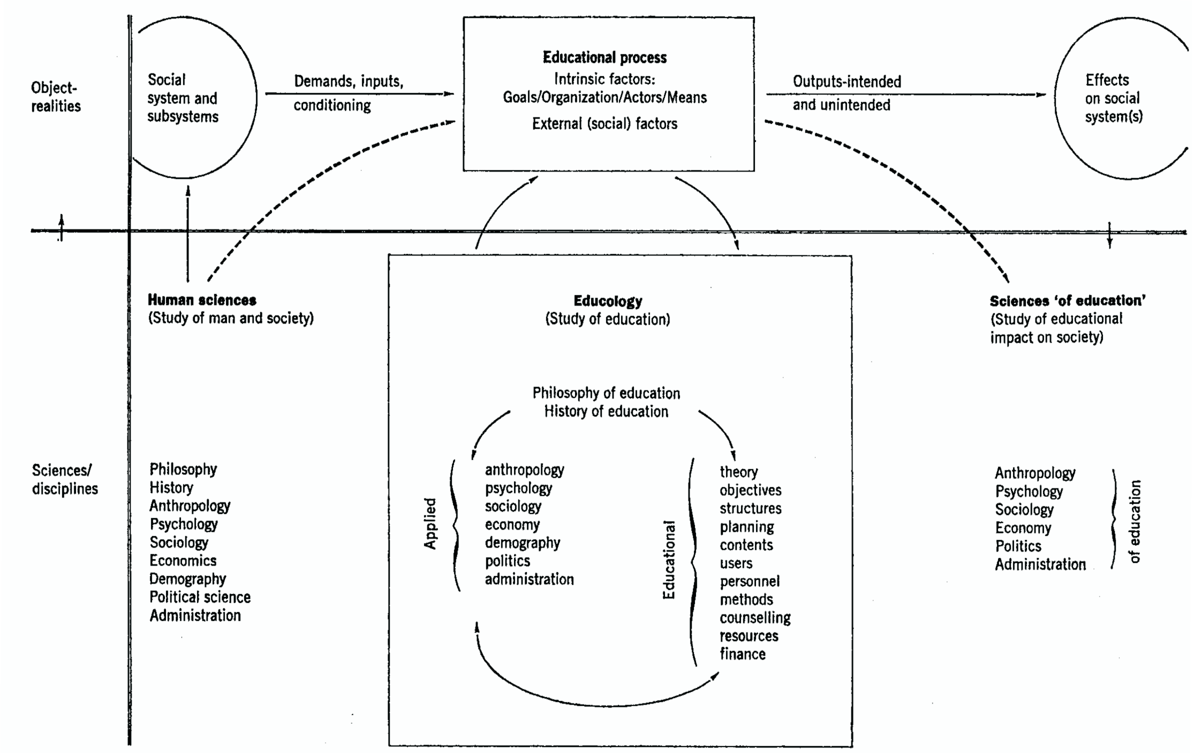
of a heterogeneous collection of contributions coming from philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, politics 'of education'. Their authors, usually not personally involved in the education system, naturally bring to these studies the bias of their particular disciplines. The economist worries about the degree of real abilities of the 'human resources' produced by education, and tries to evaluate the cost of their acquisition; the sociologist wants to know whether education prepares people to adapt themselves to their social environment, or perhaps to foster change and revolution; the philosopher, from a wider perspective, inquires into the general meaning and the goals of education, what such goals are and should be in today's world.

Olivera noted that all these contributions of the plural 'sciences of education' are valuable and even indispensable; but he suggested that they remain on the fringes of the specific features of the day-to-day processes of growth and development, the interpersonal relationships between educators and educated, and the corresponding frame of institutional arrangements. Olivera then declared that the domain of education does have a unique disciplinary body of knowledge, and that it deserves a label to reflect that. Existing commonly-used labels, he suggested, are inadequate. Thus Pedagogy is misleading because it does not refer to a knowledge but to an action that of 'leading' children, first to their teacher and later to learning as such. Olivera also rejected as inadequate the terms Didactics, Sciences of Education (in the plural), and Science of Education (in the singular); and he declared (p.176) that “simply to say 'education' is a semantic nonsense: education is an activity not a knowledge just as society is not sociology, language is not linguistics, and animals are not zoology”.

To overcome this difficulty, Olivera drew on the proposals previously made by Christensen (1984) and Steiner Maccia (1964), and asserted that there was no better word than 'educology'. The word, he declared, “clearly designates all educational knowledge, and nothing but that knowledge, whether scientific or pragmatic, acquired through any discipline”. He added that the word might initially look strange, or even pedantic, just as 'sociology' another Graeco-Latin hybrid did in its time; but, he claimed, “it brings to educational science such clarity and precision that it should be generally adopted”.

Olivera recognised that more important than the name was the basic theoretical structure of the contents of educology, that is, of the whole field of educational knowledge into which every new piece of research could find its place and be tested for congruence with already existing knowledge. Olivera proposed such delineation with the aid of a diagram which separated the human sciences on the one hand from the sciences 'of education' on the other hand, and located educology between them. In turn, these were linked to object-realities as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Olivera's System-Based Classification of Education-Related Disciplines



Source: Olivera (1988), p.178.

The question then for the present discussion is where comparative education fits into this schema, for it is notably absent from Figure 1. To answer this question, Olivera began by noting (p.179) that at the level of common or pre-scientific knowledge, comparison between objects, and therefore the establishment of mental relationships among them, lies at the very origin of concepts and ideas. A refined form of the same mental processes is used at the scientific level for establishing definitions, measuring phenomena, or building models. Thus each component in Figure 1 is based on comparison, and the distinctions between the sciences are themselves the results of comparison (between their objects, viewpoints, methods, etc.).

But if comparison as a method is universal, Olivera continued (p.180), a 'comparative' science only deserves this name when it carries comparison to a higher level of abstraction becoming in effect a 'comparison of comparisons'. Thus, particularly in social disciplines, “the adjective 'comparative' can only be used when the comparison is applied to previously elaborated sets of theoretical statements referring to realities of a similar kind pertaining to discrete social groups”. In many comparative fields, including comparative education, one common such social group is a nation or a country; but any case, being 'discrete' these units can always be approached as 'systems'. Since each of those previous sets of knowledge is in itself partially the result of comparison, comparative fields of enquiry in effect present a sort of second-degree use of the comparative method.

In turn, this explains why comparative education was not included in Figure 1: it would have required a third dimension to the diagram, since comparative education represents in effect a higher epistemological level. As explained by Olivera (p.181):

Its approach to truth covers all the particular objects of the disciplines mentioned in the central section of the diagram. But strictly speaking, it does not tackle any of them directly, for it is not interested in any single educational situation, but in two or more at the same time. In order to manage several real objects simultaneously, each of these situations must have been rendered manageable, that is, comparable, through a first level of abstraction.

Thus, commencing with a plurality of these abstract models and using its own theoretical and methodological tools, comparative education produces its own second-degree data and reaches its own conclusions. Such conclusions may be of many kinds, including laws or quasi-laws, provisional theories, confirmations or refutations of previous theories, new hypotheses for future research, and so on. As Olivera concluded (p.181), these products, now of a truly comparative nature, “may of course be used for action on any of the systems originally studied; but above all they enlarge and eventually modify the data and the conclusions of the specific studies, and provide feed-back to individual disciplines”.

Methodology and Focus in Comparative Education

As explained above, the disciplines which have had the greatest impact on comparative education are clustered in the social sciences. To some extent, therefore, shifts in dominant paradigms within the social sciences have led to shifts in the field of comparative education. This includes the rise of positivism in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in Europe and North America, the popularity of post-modernism in the 1980s and 1990s, and the ubiquity of globalisation as a lens in the 2000s and 2010s (Epstein 1994; Cowen & Kazamias 2009a; Davies 2009; Larsen 2010). However, comparative education scholars have tended to use a fairly limited set of tools from the social sciences. This is partly for the reasons explained above, i.e. that much (or even most) comparative education is in a sense a second-level comparison which relies on units which have already been identified through comparison. Books and journal articles in the field of comparative education contain many commentaries based on literature reviews, but relatively few studies based on survey research, and almost no studies based on experimental methods.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, Foster et al. (2012) analysed articles published between 2004 and 2008 in four major English-language journals. One was a US journal, namely the *Comparative Education Review*; and the others were UK journals, namely *Comparative Education*, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education,* and the *International Journal of Educational Development*. Foster et al. found (p.712) that the articles “addressed education in society (social context) nearly a third more often than education administration and governance (direct education context), and more than twice as often as direct teaching and learning (education content).” Education policy and planning were the focus of 41 per cent of the articles, followed by education theory (24%), attitudes and values (21%), and globalisation (20%). Information and communication technology, education leadership, examinations, and textbooks each attracted only

2 per cent of the articles. Geographically, 24 per cent of articles focused on Africa, 23 per cent on Asia, 17 per cent on Europe, and 21 per cent on more than one region.

Foster et al. (2012, p.728) also examined the methods. Over half (53%) of the articles employed document review and historical analysis, 35 per cent on survey/quantitative analysis, and 27 per cent on interviews/focus groups. Only 1 per cent used experimental or quasi-experimental methods, and another 1 per cent tracer or longitudinal studies.

This survey to some extent built on an earlier survey by Rust et al. (1999). They had taken a longer time span, namely 1957 to 1995, and focused on *Comparative Education Review*, *Comparative Education*, and the *International Journal of Educational Development*. Concerning the 1960s, Rust et al. found (p.100) that 48 per cent were mainly based on literature review and 15 per cent were historical studies. For the 1980s and 1990s, Rust et al. found a marked drop in the two categories – to 26 per cent mainly based on literature review, and 5 per cent historical studies. Reviews of projects had increased, as had participant observation and research based on interviews and questionnaires. In this respect, the field had increased its use of at least some standard social science instruments.

However, dominant themes and methodological approaches have been very different in different parts of the world at particular periods in history. McGrath (2012, p.709), writing an Editorial about the Foster et al. (2012) article was careful to remark that the analysis was conducted on English-medium journals published in a pair of countries that had related research cultures. Such cultures are not necessarily found elsewhere. Along this line, Cowen and Kazamias (2009b, p.4) highlighted the co-existence of multiple comparative educations. Their observation on the one hand applies to different groups within particular countries who have different methodological approaches and domains of enquiry, and who may or may not communicate with each other. It also applies to groups in different countries who operate in different languages with different scholarly traditions, and who also may or may not communicate with counterparts in other countries and language groups.

Beginning with the first of these two groups, many scholars in the field simply ignore others who have different viewpoints, and are nevertheless able to get their work published either because the journals in which they publish are eclectic in focus or because the journals serve different audiences. Epstein (1992, p.23) is among scholars who have pointed out that certain rival epistemological orientations in the field of comparative education are fundamentally incompatible. When scholars work in different languages, the divergence may be even greater. Concerning this matter, it is instructive to compare the work of Harold Noah and Max Eckstein during the three decades from the mid-1970s with that of Gu Mingyuan. Sets of collected works by these authors have been published by the Comparative Education Research Centre at the University of Hong Kong, and thus may easily be placed side by side (Noah & Eckstein 1998; Gu 2001). Among the major concerns of Noah and Eckstein, who were based in the USA and who operated mainly in the English-speaking arena, were methodological issues in the positivist framework and oriented to First World concerns. Gu, by contrast, operated mainly in the Russian- and Chinese-speaking arenas. His writings, particularly during the early part of his career, were couched within a Marxist-Leninist framework, and he was especially concerned with the lessons that China could learn from industrialised countries. Especially during the 1970s and 1980s, the comparative education world in which Gu lived was a very different environment from that in which Noah and Eckstein lived.

Everywhere, one domain in which the fundamentals of the field of comparative education could be challenged concerned the extent to which the writings in the field were actually comparative. A longstanding complaint by many scholars in the field (e.g. Cummings 1999; Little 2000; Wolhuter 2008) has been that many articles even in journals which explicitly include the word Comparative in their titles, such as *Comparative Education* and *Comparative Education Review*, contain large numbers of single-country studies in which the nature and extent of comparison is open to question. In conferences devoted to the field, in which the screening processes are usually much more lax than for publication in journals, the conceptual looseness is even more pronounced. Thus, as noted by Olivera (1988, pp.166-167), for example:

The list of papers presented to the last two World Congresses of Comparative Education Societies (Paris, 1984; Rio de Janeiro, 1987: over 350 papers in all) is … very revealing. Only a minority (19 per cent in Paris, 26 per cent in Rio) are genuinely comparative studies, dealing either with worldwide educational problems or with specific issues studies in two or more countries. Another 13-17 per cent attach themselves to problems of theory, epistemology or methodology. On the other hand, about half of the papers (45 per cent in Rio) are case-studies, which do no more than describe and sometimes analyse a system, a historical process, an innovation or a special national situation. Not only is there no comparison here, but they make no attempt to draw any conclusions or at least to suggest some hypothesis which could be useful in other contexts. Then, a sizeable number (7 per cent in Rio) propose some reflections on education or describe some innovation in a general way, without reference to any concrete situation.

Part of the reason for this looseness arises from alliances between the field of comparative education and the field of international education, which Wilson (1994) described as Siamese twins. The term international education means different things to different people. For example, some individuals describe it as the process of training people to see themselves as international in orientation (e.g. Gellar 2002); while others have used the term international education to mean “the various types of educational and cultural relations among nations” (Scanlon & Shields 1968, p.x). The distinction drawn by Rust (2002, p.iii) is that comparative education covers more academic, analytic and scientific aspects of the field, while international education is related to cooperation, understanding, and exchange elements. In the US, the Comparative Education Society (CES), which had been founded in 1956, was renamed the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) in 1968 (Berends & Trakas 2016), though the official journal of that society retained its name as the *Comparative Education Review*. Other professional societies in which the twin fields are placed together include the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC) and the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE).

The ambiguities reflected in these names contribute to the ambiguities in the field. The editors of the CIES journal find it difficult to reject articles which could be described as part of international education rather than comparative education, since the former is as much a part of the name of the CIES as is the latter, even though the title of the journal reflects only the comparative side of the society's name. For some time a similar remark applied to the BAICE journal, which was entitled *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, but in 2009 the problem was resolved by making the sub-title *A Journal of Comparative and International Education* (Bray 2010). The CIESC journal has the opposite bias, because it is entitled *Canadian and International Education* and thus does not mention comparison in its title.

The World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) does not contain the word International in its title, and in that sense is less constrained by the ambiguities that confront the four above-named national societies. However, these four bodies are among the 39 constituent societies of the WCCES, and the world body is thus also influenced by the ambiguities especially because the US-based Comparative & International Education Society (CIES) has always been the largest and most active of the WCCES constituent societies (Masemann et al. 2007). Thus, when World Congresses of Comparative Education Societies are organised on behalf of the WCCES, loose definitions of the field are always used. In the specific cases of the 1984 Paris Congress and the 1987 Rio de Janeiro Congress mentioned above, the organisers, as noted by Olivera (1988, p.168), did not feel entitled to refuse any of the papers to which Olivera referred since there seem to be no accepted criteria to define what is and what is not comparative education. The same issue has recurred in each subsequent Congress.

Geomorphic Shifts

As noted above, Becher and Trowler (2001) observed major changes in the domain of higher education, particularly in the UK and the US. These changes brought what Becher and Trowler called “major geomorphic shifts” in the landscape on which the academic territories lay. Among the causes were the increasingly intrusive role of the state, demands for performance, and an increasing need for academics to 'chase the dollar'. The impact of these changes has been felt in the field of comparative education as well as in other fields. However, the nature of the geomorphic shifts has been different in different parts of the world; and despite the geomorphic shifts, many continuities are evident.

In the UK and the US, one way in which the state has affected the field of comparative education has been through foreign aid policies. Indeed the paper by Foster et al. (2012) originated in work commissioned by the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), which wished to support planning for research funding within the framework of UK foreign aid. Similarly, Rust et al. (1999) found that during the 1980s and 1990s, reviews of projects were more prominent than in earlier years in the three journals that they surveyed. Many of these projects were conducted under the auspices of DFID or its predecessors, and of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The projects commonly employed academics as consultants, and the types of projects on which those government bodies chose to focus in turn influenced the field of comparative education. Insofar as projects focused on primary rather than secondary education or vocational education, for example, academic papers were written about those domains. Also, many papers in UK and US journals have been concerned about the role of external assistance *per se*, including the work not only of bilateral agencies but also of multilateral ones such as the World Bank and UNESCO.

The policies of multilateral agencies and of governments in both rich and poor countries have also influenced the extent to which particular countries have been given prominence in the field. This point may be illustrated by contrasting the visibility in the comparative education conferences and literature of Nigeria and China. During the 1970s and 1980s Nigeria was relatively visible, first because of the foreign aid projects in Nigeria, second because Nigeria used its oil-generated revenues to recruit many foreign nationals for its education system, and third because the Nigerian government funded many Nigerians to go abroad for higher education. By the 1990s, the oil boom had evaporated and external bodies were less interested in Nigeria. Also, conditions for research in Nigeria by non-Nigerians became even more difficult than they had been, in part because of social unrest. By contrast, before the 1990s very few papers on China were presented in the conferences and journals of the UK and US comparative education societies. This was chiefly because the Chinese government operated a relatively closed-door policy, neither letting foreign researchers in nor encouraging Chinese scholars to go out. Related to this, the UK and US governments operated few projects in China. By the 2000s, however, this picture had changed dramatically. Many Chinese scholars were studying in UK and US universities, and had brought their insights and data with them. Foreign nationals found it much easier to visit China through a range of programmes, including aid and international exchange projects financed by foreign governments. A further significant element was the increase in the number of Chinese scholars who learned English and who therefore on the one hand had access to literature in English and on the other hand were able to communicate with outsiders in that language.

Another geomorphic shift of great significance to the field of comparative education was the break up of the Soviet Union. Insofar as countries were a major unit of analysis, the division of the USSR into 15 sovereign states greatly increased the visibility of those states in the field. As in China, moreover, the English language became much more widely spoken than had previously been the case.

Concerning performance, which was another element identified by Becher and Trowler, the UK became well known for its Research Assessment Exercises, which had counterparts in Hong Kong and various other places. These Exercises increased pressure on academics to publish, and in the field of comparative education contributed to the expansion of existing journals and to the launching of new ones. Expansion may be illustrated by the facts that:

- in 1992, the Netherlands-published *International Review of Education* increased from four to six issues a year;
- in 1993 the UK journal *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* increased from two to three issues a year, in 2003 it further expanded to four issues, in 2007 to five issues, and in 2009 to six issues.
- in 1998, the UK journal *International Journal of Educational Development* increased from four to six issues a year; and
- in 2002, the Chinese journal *Comparative Education Review* increased from six to 12 issues a year.

New journals appearing since the turn of the century include:

- *Comparative and International Education Review*, launched in Greece in 2003;
- *Research in Comparative and International Education*, which was launched in the UK in 2006; and
- the *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, which was launched by the University of Malaya in 2012.

In addition, of course, many comparative education scholars published in journals which were not specifically dedicated to the field. They also published books and contributed chapters to edited works. The expansion in publication outlets partly reflected general growth in higher education, and thus in the number of academics working in universities, but also the increased pressure on academics to conduct research and publish their findings.

The third element in the geomorphic shift identified by Becher and Trowler (2001) was the increased pressure to generate income. This pressure was chiefly caused by a general tendency of governments to reduce the extent to which they funded higher education institutions, and was coupled with higher education expansion which intensified competition between institutions. Many institutions sought to increase their non-government revenues through recruitment of fee-paying overseas students. This trend was especially evident in Australia, where higher education for overseas students became a major industry (Ninnes & Hellstén 2005; Zipin & Brennan 2012). In the process, the institutions and their staff members became more outward-looking. This internationalisation further contributed to the field of comparative education.

Related to this phenomenon, and forming a further major geomorphic shift, has been the advent and impact of globalisation. Easton (2007, pp.7-8) has pointed out that globalisation is in many respects an old concept with deep roots, but the scale, nature and impact of globalisation during the 1990s and initial decades of the present century has certainly been new. In some respects, globalisation has revitalised the field of comparative education by emphasising the need for cross national perspectives and by providing new themes for analysis. However, in another sense it has diluted the field because large numbers of academics consider themselves to have international and comparative perspectives but have weak or non-existent grounding in the methodologies and traditions of the field (Crossley & Watson 2003, pp.1-11; Mitter 2009, p.98).

Finally, geomorphic shifts have been brought by technology. One component of this has been increased access to inexpensive air travel, which has facilitated the work of scholars who wish to undertake research outside their own countries. Perhaps even more significant has been the advent of the internet, which has greatly increased access to information. Accompanying the internet, e-mail permits academics dispersed around the globe to communicate with each other almost instantaneously at low cost. New technologies have also brought changes in the publishing industry. Many new journals are solely internet-based; and among the traditional journals, most have moved to electronic publication in parallel to their paper versions.

Partly because several of these geomorphic shifts were global in scope, the geographic differences in the field, highlighted above by contrasting the book written by Noah and Eckstein with that written by Gu, tended to narrow. Enlarging on this example, as China opened up and as English became more widespread, scholars in China paid more attention to the literatures and methodological approaches of Western countries. Academic interchange between the two cultures increased, facilitated by translations of materials and by cross-national visits by both sides.

Nevertheless, despite these geomorphic shifts, some characteristics of the field of comparative education have remained as pronounced in the present century as they were in previous eras. Thus, referring back to Olivera's comments about the lack of disciplinary coherence in the offerings at the Paris (1984) and Rio de Janeiro (1987) World Congresses of Comparative Education Societies, it is unlikely that analysis of offerings at the subsequent World Congresses would have done much to change his perspective[1]. Despite attempts in some quarters to circumscribe the field of comparative education more tightly, it remains very loosely defined in all regions of the world. The journals written in Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish may differ from each other in their methodological emphases and in the themes chosen by their contributors, but are broadly comparable in their eclecticism and in the fact that they are methodologically much less rigorous than most purists in the field of comparative education would desire.

Conclusions

The extent to which education would be considered a discipline could be disputed. Becher and Trowler (2001) did consider it a discipline, albeit in the soft and applied categories. Other observers would consider it to be a field of study which welcomes scholars who have been trained in other domains. The field has developed significantly over the decades and centuries but, as noted by Olivera (1988, p.174), „an educator is not easily accepted as a member of the scientific community, unless he or she has had formal training in some other social discipline". Nevertheless, Olivera made a case for asserting the disciplinary identity of education more strongly, and proposed the more widespread use of the label 'educology'.

If education cannot easily be described as a discipline, the field of comparative education is even further from that status. The academic tribe which operates under the label of comparative education is a fairly loose grouping of individuals. It is related to another tribe which operates under the label of international education and which to some extent inhabits the same territory. There has been considerable inter-marriage between members of these tribes, leading to corresponding mixes in the characteristics of offspring (Wilson 1994, p.450; Turner 2010, pp.268-270).

One merit of an environment in which scholars from a range of disciplines are welcome to converge is that cross-fertilisation between approaches can be permitted and

[1]The subsequent World Congresses were held in in Montreal (1989), Prague (1992), Sydney (1996), Cape Town (1998), Chungbuk, South Korea (2001), Havana (2004), Sarajevo (2007), Istanbul (2010), Buenos Aires (2013), Beijing (2016) and Cancun, Mexico (2019).

encouraged. This does occur to some extent in comparative education: economists, sociologists, demographers and political scientists meet together and illuminate each other through their varying perspectives on education systems and processes in different countries and cultures. However, the extent of cross-fertilisation is in many respects disappointing. As in multi-disciplinary universities where the Faculties of Law, Science, Architecture, Dentistry and Education do not usually have much intellectual interflow, and instead tend to inhabit separate intellectual territories within the same geographic space, the field of comparative education is also compartmentalised. Positivists and neo-Marxists do occasionally clash, and even more occasionally do learn from each other, but in general they ignore each other. Similar remarks may be made about psychologists and anthropologists, and, moving to area specialisms, Africanists and Sinologists, for example.

Returning to Becher and Trowler's distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' fields, comparative education is on the whole rural in nature. Researchers typically cover broad stretches of intellectual territory in which the problems are not sharply demarcated or delineated, and the field does not have fierce competition resembling that in microchip technology or research on HIV/AIDS, for example. Team work in comparative education may be considered useful, but even when the teams exist they tend to be loosely organised. Instead it is commonly considered more sensible to opt for division of labour, on the grounds that plenty of topics await exploration and that there is little point in tackling ones on which others are intensively engaged. As in other rural fields of study, comparative education tends to have quite lengthy publication lag times, and book-length works are an important form of scholarly output in addition to journal articles.

Like other domains of enquiry, however, the territory of comparative education has undergone some geomorphic shifts in recent years. These shifts partly arise from the increasing intrusiveness of the state in higher education, from demands for performance, and from financial pressures. Other factors include technological advances, and geopolitical changes. These geomorphic shifts have altered the ways in which groups within the field of comparative education have defined themselves and have related both to each other and to academics in other fields. Certain ways of thinking, such as those associated with Cold War politics, have gone out of fashion, while others, including those related to globalisation, have come into fashion.

However, the field continues to tolerate considerable descriptive work of a low intellectual calibre. This is especially evident in conferences devoted to comparative education, where screening processes are even less rigorous than for publications. Thus, in addition to the extensive disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity is a considerable amount of non- disciplinarity. Alternatively, slightly adjusting the last of these words, the field of comparative education contains considerable undisciplined thinking, in which vague ideas and poorly thought-out methods of analysis are tolerated alongside more rigorous work. Some conference organisers and publishers would defend this situation on the grounds that undisciplined scholars, particularly if they are neophytes in the field, may at least have potential to inform their listeners and to become more rigorous in their own work. Other participants and observers would consider this eclecticism and lack of discipline to be detrimental to the field and to the advance of intellectual enquiry (Wiseman & Anderson 2013).

Among Olivera's (1988) pertinent observations was (p.175) that:

In principle … only the educator is in a position to develop the science of education (as sociology is developed by sociologists, economics by economists or demography by demographers) with the help of, but not subservient to, other social scientists. But on the other hand, educators are not usually trained scientists, and anyway the time-consuming requirements of their profession would not leave them leisure to elaborate scientifically the data they gather in their work.

This remark presents a strong rationale for thinking not only within but also across disciplines. This process itself requires analysis of the nature of disciplines, and of the factors which contribute to the development of those disciplines.

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Bray Mark. Scholarly enquiry and the field of comparative education

The article deals with the features of comparative education as a field of scientific search and academic discipline, its place in the system of sciences, its connection with other fields of scientific research.

Attention is drawn to the fact that comparative education, characterized by utilitarianism, aims to improve professional activity, belongs to the social and applied sciences and, in the opinion of some scientists, formally has the status of an independent scientific discipline. Education as a whole and comparative education as a part of it have their own "tribe" (community of scientists and scientific institutions) and "territory" (their own scientific ideas, problems, methodological approaches and types of discourse). Its specificity is manifested in interdisciplinary character, interaction of representatives of different sciences, the use of approaches and methods of other scientific disciplines, methodological uncertainty.

"Geomorphic shifts" that the "territory" of comparative education have undergone have been characterized. The shifts which are associated with the growing influence of the state on the area of higher education, increasing requirements for the results of research activities, financial difficulties, technological achievements, and geopolitical changes. It is indicated that the field of comparative education continues to cope with a significant amount of descriptive work of low intellectual level.

Key words: education, comparative education, international education, scientific discipline, tribes, territories, geomorphic shifts.

Брей М. Науковий пошук і галузь порівняльної освіти

У статті розглянуто особливості порівняльної освіти як зони наукового пошуку й академічної дисципліни, показано її місце в системі наук, зв'язок з іншими галузями наукових досліджень. Звертається увага на те, що порівняльна освіта, що характеризується утилітарністю й прагненням до удосконалення професійної діяльності, відноситься до суспільно-прикладних наук і, на думку деяких учених, формально має статус самостійної наукової дисципліни. Освіта в цілому і порівняльна освіта як її частина мають власне „плем'я” (співтовариство вчених і наукові установи) й „територію” (власні наукові ідеї, проблематику, методологічні підходи і види дискурсу). Її специфіка проявляється в міждисциплінарному характері, взаємодії представників різних наук, використанні підходів і методів інших наукових дисциплін, методологічній невизначеності.

Схарактеризовано „геоморфні зрушення”, які зазнала на сучасному етапі „територія” порівняльної освіти, пов'язані із зростаючим впливом держави на сферу вищої освіти, підвищенням вимог до результатів дослідницької діяльності, фінансовими труднощами, технологічними досягненнями, геополітичними змінами. Вказано, що галузь

порівняльної освіти продовжує миритися зі значною кількістю описової роботи низького інтелектуального рівня.

Ключові слова: освіта, порівняльна освіта, міжнародна освіта, наукова дисципліна, племена, території, геоморфні зрушення.

Брей М. Научный поиск и область сравнительного образования

В статье рассмотрены особенности сравнительного образования как области научного поиска и академической дисциплины, показано его место в системе наук, связь с другими областями научных исследований. Обращается внимание на то, что сравнительное образование, характеризующееся утилитарностью и стремлением к усовершенствованию профессиональной деятельности, относится к общественно-прикладным наукам и, по мнению некоторых ученых, формально имеет статус самостоятельной научной дисциплины. Образование в целом и сравнительное образование как его часть имеют собственное «племя» (сообщество ученых и научные учреждения) и «территорию» (собственные научные идеи, проблематику, методологические подходы и виды дискурса). Его специфика проявляется в междисциплинарном характере, взаимодействии представителей разных наук, использовании подходов и методов других научных дисциплин, методологической неопределенности.

Охарактеризованы «геоморфные сдвиги», которые претерпела на современном этапе «территория» сравнительного образования, связанные с растущим влиянием государства на сферу высшего образования, повышением требований к результатам исследовательской деятельности, финансовыми трудностями, технологическими достижениями, геополитическими изменениями. Указано, что область сравнительного образования продолжает мириться со значительным количеством описательной работы низкого интеллектуального уровня.

Ключевые слова: образование, сравнительное образование, международное образование, научная дисциплина, племена, территории, геоморфные сдвиги.

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