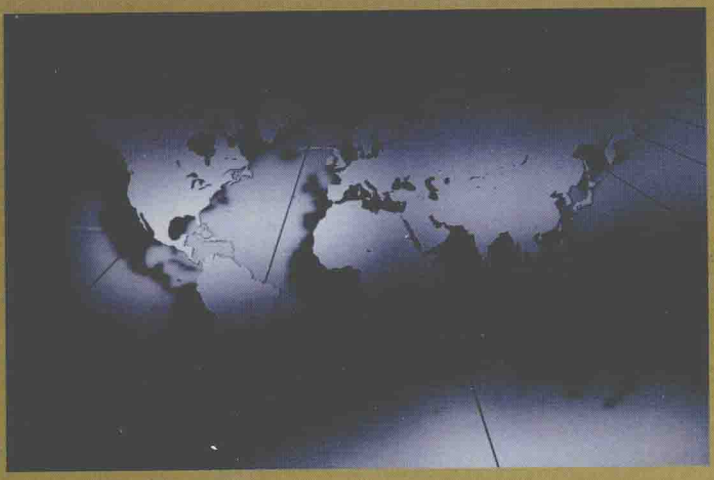
INTERNATIONAL & DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION



Critical Approaches to Comparative Education

Vertical Case Studies from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas

EDITED BY
FRANCES VAVRUS AND
LESLEY BARTLETT

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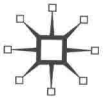

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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Foreword

Henry M. Levin

Most publications in comparative education address either micro-units or macro-units of education, individual families, schools, and communities, or the overall system of education. Case studies are typically used to incorporate rich descriptions of a single school or community. However, attempts to characterize an entire system of education focus little on the details of individual schools and what happens inside them. The connections between these two polar perspectives are rarely analyzed in any detail. Yet, in an age of decentralization of resources and decision making and devolution of authority, the connections between the large and the small are crucial determinants of educational dynamics and school functioning. How change occurs in one part of the educational system can affect other parts as well.

The duality implicit in traditional approaches to comparative education creates the impressions that the micro and macro versions are only loosely connected. This was an insight that struck me when I arrived as a faculty member in 1968 at Stanford University. Although I was trained in a parochial version of economics, I had a curiosity about what went on in other disciplines in education. The large crowd of students queuing to enter Cubberley Hall on Mondays and Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. induced me to enter one day, far too late to find a seat. In an auditorium with a capacity of 500, at least 600 students were jammed into seats, aisles, floors, stairways, and the stage, listening to a middle-aged couple talk about understanding education in the context of something called cultural transmission. My colleagues, George and Louise Spindler, stood before this adoring crowd displaying photographs, film strips, and artifacts of many societies demonstrating how education must be understood in its function of preparing the young for roles specific to their cultures.

Although I was time-deprived as an untenured faculty member under heavy pressure to publish and teach (in addition to family demands with three children and anti-Vietnam War activity), I attended as many of the Spindlers' classes as I could. In each, I learned about the detailed scrutiny

of anthropologists and how they construct an understanding of culture by examining the interactions between powerful beliefs and the varied functions of institutions.

In contrast with this approach dwelling on the local and micro-aspects of education, the comparative education courses we taught from the perspective of economics and politics were very macro. In those courses, we looked at the overall system of education and how it was organized and financed to discharge its responsibilities. The details of how schools and communities functioned were rarely described in our comparative analyses other than some of their organizational features. Furthermore, as much of the literature on comparative education was bifurcated between the large and the small, so were the courses that we taught.

A major uniqueness of this volume is its attempt to connect these levels by constructing "vertical case studies," a term that the editors and authors use to address the flow of action across levels as influenced by political, social, economic, and cultural forces. One issue addressed through vertical case studies is the influence of neoliberalism as it reverberates through every level of the educational system. Of particular focus is the democratization of educational politics and practices as they are transformed through privatization, decentralization, and changes in participation. Changes in educational practices and organization are connected in these chapters to immigration policies, the War on Terror, the racialization of minority youth, and other socioeconomic, gender, and geographical hierarchies that are interconnected in their educational treatments. Further, the volume examines the influence of international development organizations on national and local educational practices, and the ways that international policies are appropriated and adopted.

As a Teachers College faculty member, I am proud that the individual contributors are former students and colleagues. Many of our faculty and students in the Department of International and Transcultural Studies have attempted to employ a critical approach to the issues addressed here. The leadership of the editors, Frances Vavrus and Lesley Bartlett, in their own research and teaching has inspired their colleagues at this institution and beyond it to consider far richer and broader ways to address their educational interests. In so many important respects, this volume represents the culmination of a decade of developments in comparative education that I hope will be extended within the field. As the world faces a fiscal crisis that is likely to alter considerably the face of education in coming decades, such vertical approaches will become increasingly important to understanding educational policy, programs, and practices. It is my expectation that the breakthroughs made in developing and applying vertical case studies to the wide range of issues in this book will be powerful tools for understanding other issues and other settings, thus making important contributions to comparative and development education.

Series Editors' Introduction

John N. Hawkins and
W. James Jacob

It is a pleasure to add to the *International & Development Education* series the new title: *Critical Approaches to Comparative Education*, edited by Frances Vavrus and Lesley Bartlett. We believe this volume will join those classics that have preceded it in helping to define and guide the field of Comparative and International Education. Together with a distinguished group of scholars who bridge theory and practice, they have produced a volume that will deepen our understanding of the field itself as well as the specific topics addressed in each chapter. Specifically, the introduction makes a cogent argument about the kinds of contributions qualitative research can make to the field of comparative education, and the subsequent chapters exemplify the value of such an approach. The *qualitative* focus of the project and the elaboration on the methodology of vertical and horizontal case studies is a welcome addition to the literature in the field of comparative and international education. A rethinking and redefinition of some critical concepts in the field is a hallmark of the volume and will serve to provoke further discussion of the direction of the field. The methodological issues raised in the book go beyond the more simplistic dichotomies of qualitative versus quantitative, or disciplinary versus interdisciplinary (including social science silos versus area studies) and instead broaden our vision by weaving the complexity of globalization with more grounded vertical and horizontal case studies. Conceptually, the chapters demonstrate the powerful contributions to the field made by contemporary theoretical approaches, including actor-network theory, sociocultural analyses of policy, and the sociocultural concept of policy and practice as *bricolage*. We are certain that this volume will provoke a broad discussion of how we "know" and specifically, as the editors state in their introduction, how we know comparatively.

Abbreviations

ABC	Abstinence, Be Faithful, Use Condom
AGED	*Association Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* [General Association of Students of Dakar]
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
BHC	Blossom Hill College
BIE	Bilingual Intercultural Education
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEO	County Education Officer
CES	Coalition of Essential Schools
CFV	Critical Friend Visit
CIE	Comparative and International Education
CIV	Community Information Volunteer
CNES	*Concertation Nationale sur l'Enseignement Supérieur* [National Consultation for Higher Education]
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSPD	Child Survival Protection and Development
DED	District Executive Director
DEO	District Education Officer
DES	Department of Education and Science
DOE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EJA	*Escola para Jovens e Adultos* [School for Young People and Adults]
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESRI	Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
GTZ	*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* [German Technical Cooperation]
HIP	Health Information Project
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HPA	Humanities Preparatory Academy
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IHED	*Institut des Hautes Etudes de Dakar* [Institute of Higher Education of Dakar]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	International Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Services
JBS	James Baldwin School
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGRP	Local Government Reform Program
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPLA	Popular Liberation Movement of Angola
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPAR	National Action Plan against Racism
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSEERS	National Entry-Exit Registration System
OMI	Office of the Minister of Integration
PAES	*Projet d'Amélioration de l'Enseignement Supérieur* [Higher Education Improvement Project]
PAID	Poverty Alleviation Initiative Developer
PBAT	Project Based Assessment Task
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PEER	Programme for Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction (UNESCO)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PT	*Partido dos Trabalhadores* [Workers' Party]
SES	Supplemental Educational Service
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SINI	Schools in Need of Improvement
SMED	*Secretario Municipal de Educaçao* [Municipal Secretary of Education]
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSP	Small Schools Project
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TEP	Teacher Emergency Package

UCAD	*Université Cheikh Anta Diop* [Cheikh Anta Diop University]
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Contents

Further, as a field, CIE is not quite sure how to define its other key demarcation: international. Studies conducted in "another country" normally qualify, but this feeble definition soon falters because it rests on the speaker's point of view. If one lives in England, studies of American schooling are international; if one lives in the United States, they generally are not. An American scholar sees research in Brazil as fully international, but what is the Brazilian Comparative Education Society to do? Further, do studies of immigrant populations living in Ireland or the United States meet the criteria for inclusion in the field? What about studies of pedagogy or policy originating elsewhere—Freirean pedagogy from Brazil, for example—used in one's home country?

Finally, the field of education, at least in the United States, maintains a certain ambivalence about the concept of comparison while generally avoiding the international. Although rankings of the country's students on international math and reading examinations often make headlines, schools of education have long focused on domestic matters. When they have programs in comparative and international education, academic institutions tend to segregate faculty and students who study educational issues beyond the nation's borders from those who study similar phenomena at home, as though U.S. teachers and students are divorced from the international.

Instead of taking this national-international distinction at face value, *Critical Approaches to Comparative Education: Vertical Case Studies from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas* posits that comparison should be central to the study of education in the United States and in other countries. Moreover, we contend that qualitative case studies that compare actors, institutions, and policies as they circulate "vertically" and "horizontally" ought to be considered as central to CIE as multicountry studies. Using a series of what we term *vertical case studies* from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas (including the United States), this book explores how educational policy, programming, and practice are shaped by and in turn influence local, national, and international forces. It brings together the work of a dynamic group of scholars whose research traces the flows of people, actions, ideas, texts, and discourses that shape educational policy and practice through schools, communities, city or district educational offices, ministries of education, and international development organizations. In the course of this work, the authors included here reconceptualize the comparative process and redraw the conventional boundaries of the field of education.

In this introduction, we seek to move from the more common terrain of methodology to the less familiar landscape of epistemology before again returning to more pragmatic questions of comparative methods. We

believe that students and scholars of comparative and international education need to pay greater attention to epistemological issues related to *what* can be known about the world and *how* it can be known through comparative research before attending to the rules and procedures—the methods—used to gain such knowledge. As Masemann argued in her 1990 CIES presidential address, "Our conceptions of ways of knowing have limited and restricted the very definition of comparative education that we have taught to students and used in our own research and, indeed, have promulgated to practitioners" (465).

In what follows, we discuss the history of approaches to comparison in the field of CIE and make an epistemological case for the value of qualitative approaches to comparison. We then argue for a specific kind of qualitative research—vertical case studies. Drawing on contemporary theoretical approaches in anthropology and sociology, we outline the specific features of such an approach. The chapters that follow the introduction demonstrate the value of developing ethnographically informed case studies that compare across time and space.

Comparing Versions of Comparison in the Field

The inauguration of comparative education as an area of study in the late nineteenth century enshrined the nation-state as the central unit of analysis. Scholars focused primarily on the school-society relationship, with little attention to transactions within schools or other educational arenas. As Sadler wrote in 1900, "[T]he things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside" (49). Early comparative historians, such as Sadler (1900), explored the relationships between school and society in European countries. Hans (1949) and Kandel (1933) employed cross-national methods to consider the influence of religious and political systems on education, respectively.

During the 1960s, the process of comparison changed in important ways. Comparison increasingly meant the study of schooling and societies in two or more nation-states, while the ascendancy of quantitative methods marginalized historical and cultural considerations in mainstream comparative education research. For instance, the venerable Bereday, who succeeded Kandel at Teachers College, Columbia University, elaborated the four steps for rigorous comparative studies in his influential 1964 text, *Comparative Methods in Education*: "First description, the systematic collection of pedagogical information in one country, then interpretation, the analysis in terms of social sciences, then juxtaposition, a simultaneous

review of several systems to determine the framework in which to compare them, and finally comparison, first of select problems and then of the total relevance of education in several countries" (27–28). Though he encouraged the field to identify "laws" of education and social development, he also urged scholars to learn the languages and social contexts of the countries being studied (Hayhoe and Mundy 2008, 9). Bereday's students, Noah and Eckstein, famously declared that the field should move "toward a science of comparative education" (1969). They described their approach as follows:

> [We promoted] an effort to instruct students about empirical research and to turn away from the descriptive and often normative approach that characterized most comparative education courses at the time. In particular, we tried to show how it was both possible and enlightening to use comparative data to *test hypotheses* about the relation between education and social phenomena. We asked our students to assemble evidence sufficient to test the cross-national validity of... statements. (1998, 9)

During this period, which saw the emergence of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) studies and the merger of the fields of CIE, many researchers turned their attention to development education. They were concerned with technical questions related primarily to education and national development, specifically the "modernization" of the countries in the global South. One could say that, for many scholars at this time, the "central problem of comparison was believed to be technical and not *theoretical*" (Popkewitz and Pereyra 1993, 7).

Comparing Ethnographic Approaches in the Field

In the 1970s, the emergence of a variety of ethnographic approaches challenged the reigning positivist paradigm. The earliest reverberations in CIE were the result of research in anthropology and education completed by the Spindlers and their colleagues. This group of scholars was concerned with how cultures sustain themselves through education, broadly conceived to extend well beyond schooling and to include enculturation and socialization (Spindler 1959, 1963, 1974; see also Spindler 2000). Early work in educational ethnography focused on two themes: comparative studies of socialization in societies without mass schooling, and investigations of the

impact of modern mass schooling on traditional models of cultural transmission. Masemann's 1976 publication, "Anthropological Approaches to Comparative Education," marked the beginning of this shift within CIE from the macrolevel to the microlevel, and from less to more attention to theoretical problems of comparison. Masemann argued that anthropological research held promise for the comparative study of education, especially studies that compared processes of socialization, schooling, and educational institutions in diverse cultural settings.

A critical review by Foley, also published in the mid-1970s, provided an excellent picture of nascent anthropological contributions to CIE. Foley highlighted anthropology's epistemological contribution to CIE in the form of:

> a hermeneutic tradition of analysis... [which is a] critical, reflexive way of knowing.... The natural science mode of inquiry makes numerous assumptions about "reality" and the investigator's relation to the "out-there reality." Such investigations are guided by further assumptions about causal relationships, objectivity, research technology and techniques, and the primacy of the scientific world view.... [In contrast,] to know in the ethnographic sense has meant learning situationally-based linguistic and role performances well enough to "survive" (culturally).... Personally replicating appropriate language and behavior in another culture is a much more demanding form of replicability than the split-half coefficient of a survey questionnaire.... Rarely is the construct, context, and predictive validity of a "model" tested with such empirical rigor as in the ethnographic mode of knowing. Good anthropological inquiry has always been experiential and reflexive and not merely technical. (1977, 313–314)

Foley lauded "philosophical and politically critical social science focused on human subjectivity as a creative, historical force" (313). Anthropological studies of education during this period focused on a variety of topics, including "the various ways that schooling reinforces ethnic, linguistic, and class inequalities," "the relatively important role that schools play in mediating structural and particularly acculturation effects on students," and "the role of school systems in cultural evolution" (317–319).

From the 1970s onward, four developments particularly influenced the conduct of ethnographic work in CIE. The first was the growing popularity of interpretivist and phenomenological approaches inspired by the work of cultural anthropologists such as Geertz. Rooted in a humanistic tradition, Geertz insisted that the ethnographer's job was to use "thick description" of local contexts to interpret how an informant experienced and understood patterns of meaning as embodied in symbols (1993, 5, 6, 14). Geertz was skeptical about attempts to generalize beyond specific

contexts; he argued that "the essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (1993, 26). Geertz's interpretive insights reverberated throughout educational research in the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Stenhouse 1979; Spindler and Spindler 1987). Enticed by the focus on meaning and symbols, as well as the anthropological tropes of holism and cultural relativism, this work reminded CIE scholars that social actions are stimulated by all sorts of motivations, not all of which might be considered predictable, reliable, or even rational.

The second major ethnographic shift in the field was occasioned by the paradigmatic revolution introduced by ethnomethodologists, who rejected positivist models of social life. Building on the sociology of knowledge (see Berger and Luckman 1967), which argued that knowledge is the historically rooted product of a social process of negotiation, interpretation, and representation, ethnomethodologists criticized the field of CIE for developing proxy measures of social life to the detriment of attention to the microlevel. Making an important epistemological point, Heyman felt that scholars should ask themselves "what is the nature of the phenomenon to be studied and what are the implications of that nature for both the way it can be studied and what shall count as knowledge about it" (1979, 243). He complained that too many comparative studies

> ignore what goes on in day-to-day interaction in schools. In normal social science fashion data are gathered on indicators for phenomena, rather than observing the phenomena themselves.... Comparative studies in education generally have not studied those factors in educational processes which can be directly observed, but have settled for the measurement of indicators for supposed social realities through the study of official statistical data, questionnaire responses, recruitment patterns, interest groups and so on.... [R]esearch based on the measurement of indicators used to stand for concepts which are then causally related using the formal deductive logical properties of constancy and identity are a gross distortion of the very social reality which comparativists seek to understand and reveal. (1979, 241–242)

Heyman recommended that scholars conduct "systematic observation and analysis of the microcosmic world of everyday life," which he thought could be achieved via audio- and videotaped interactions (1979, 245).

Anthropological case studies from this period reminded the field of CIE of the value of examining the politics of interaction (including research interactions) and the interpretative imperative of all social actors, including teachers and students. Unfortunately, as Foley (1977) noted, studies from this period too often failed to compare their work or to look beyond the microlevel. They abandoned the "effort to relate their findings to other

field studies of schools" and failed to "study up" (meaning studying those with power) in either a theoretical or a descriptive sense (321). Few studies reported reliably about the overall formal school system, its organizational structure, and national sociopolitical context, and thus they neglected to generate data for detailed comparisons between formal curriculum, teacher certification, pedagogical methods, and a host of questions studied in educational foundations. Thus, phenomenologically and/or ethnomethodologically inspired qualitative studies provided important corrections to the work in the early period of anthropology of education, but they often lost sight of the value of cross-cultural comparison. As Spindler (2000) acknowledged, too often "school ethnography has been micro-analytic rather than holistic and it has been confined to our own schools without comparative reference, [which] can give us perspectives on our own schools and our assumptions about education" (181).

The third and, in our opinion, most provocative approach introduced to the field of CIE during this period was critical ethnography. Informed by Marxist and feminist theories of schooling and social change, these scholars promoted ethnography as an appropriate comparative education methodology and critical theory as a way to conceptualize uneven local and global distributions of power. Critical ethnography was heavily influenced not only by the new sociology of education but specifically by Bourdieu's work on social reproduction and forms of capital (see, e.g., Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1986) and Willis's (1981) ingenious ethnography explaining "how working class kids get working class jobs." Masemann (1982), for one, called for critical ethnography because it "investigate[s] the lived life of school without necessarily limiting the analysis to the actors perceptions' of their situations" (13). Such research situated the careful study of schooling in specific contexts within a broader sociopolitical context, thereby addressing the call to "study up" to the national or international levels. Inspired by Willis, a spate of "resistance and accommodation studies" emerged that exemplified the strengths and shortcomings of this approach (Marcus 1998, 42). Too often critical ethnography in CIE suffered from what Marcus (1998) called a "macro-micro world narrative structure" in which the researcher examined how monolithic, dehistoricized, and oversimplified systems such as capitalism shaped local social action, even as they were resisted (43). The perspectives of school-based actors became mere illustrations of these larger processes, and their actions metonyms for the economic system itself.

Although both theory and method gained prominence in the field of education as a result of critical studies of schooling, ethnographic research rarely provided an opportunity for explicit comparison because of its insistence on particular local contexts. Critical ethnographers were aware of