

CHAPTER 1. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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By the end of this chapter the student should be able to:

- State a guiding definition of comparative education
- Highlight the rationale for studying comparative education by educational practitioners in his/her country.
- Identify some of the challenges that the comparative educationist are faced with in his/her quest in using information from other countries in the 21st century.

DEFINING COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

The history of comparative education can be traced from the earliest times of human history. For example, prehistoric human differentiated between the two genders i.e. between man and woman. In order for the human to improve his/her life comparison has been an important aspect in their life. In political settings, leaders have been inspired to yield equal or more power and authority in comparison to their neighbours. In education circles reformers and educationists have been comparing their system with that found in other countries in order to improve their own. In line with this thinking, then what is comparative education? **Comparative education** is a fully established academic field of study that examines education in one country (or group of countries) by using data and insights drawn from the practices and situation in another country, or countries. Programs and courses in

comparative education are offered in many universities throughout the world, and relevant studies are regularly published in scholarly journals such as *Comparative Education*, *International Review of Education*, *International Journal of Educational Development*, and *Comparative Education Review*. The field of comparative education is supported by many projects associated with UNESCO and the national education ministries of various nations.

Comparative education has been defined in different ways by various authors but what is common in the definitions is the emphasis on the use of data from another educational system. Getao (1996) defined Comparative Education as a discipline, the study of educational systems in which one seeks to understand the similarities and differences among educational systems. Noah and Eckstein (1969) defined comparative education as follows: Comparative Education is potentially more than a collection of data and perspectives from social science applied to education in different countries. Neither the topic of education nor the cross-national dimension is central to any of the social sciences; nor are the social science concerns and the cross-national dimension central to the works of educators. The field of comparative education is best defined as an intersection of the social sciences, education and cross-national study.

On the other hand, Sodhi (2006) has quoted various definitions as put forward by renowned comparativists, taking another angle than the above comparativists, who either defines Comparative Education as focusing on various education systems, such as Getao or as a interdisciplinary social science, such as Noah and Eckstein. This angle depart from the premise first formulated sir **Michael Sandler** (1861-1943). In a well-known lecture which de delivered in 1900, he contended that in studying foreign system of education it should not be forgotten that things outside the school matter even more than things inside; and that an education system is the outcome of (societal) forces which have been operated over an extended period of time. Thus he opened a new way of conceptualising Comparative Education and foreign education systems, namely as the outcome of societal or contextual forces.

Isaac Kandel (1881-1965) took up Sandler's view that comparative education should not emphasize only educational set up, organization, administration, methods, curriculum and teaching but also the causes

behind educational problems of different countries and attempted solutions in the light of their social, political, cultural and national ideologies. It is not sufficient to know that education systems are different than ones own education system. It must explain as to why this difference is there. He believed in the theory of causation. This shaping factor of national education systems, he called "national character". The national character of a country shapes its education system. In order to understand a particular national education system, it is necessary to turn to the national character of the particular nation in question. For example, in order to understand the Japanese education system, it is necessary first to study the Japanese national character, as that has shaped the Japanese education system. Kandel explains this approach of his elaborately in his book *Studies in Comparative Education*, which was for many years the standard text of Comparative Education. Together with Jullien, Kandel is commonly called the "father of Comparative Education".

In his book, *Comparative Education: a Study of Educational Factors and Traditions*, **Nicholas Hans** (1888-1969) arrived at the following classification of three groups of factors influencing the educational development in countries:

- i. Natural factors: race, environment and language
- ii. Religious factors: Catholicism, Anglicanism and Protestantism
- iii. Secular factors: Humanism, Socialism and Nationalism.

The operation of these factors he illustrates in his book with the examples of England, USA, France and USSR.

Vernon Mallinson agrees with Hans and Kandel about comparative education, laying emphasis on the societal contextual factors shaping education systems. To him comparative education means *a systematic examination of other cultures and other systems of education deriving from these cultures in order to discover resemblances and differences and why variant solutions have been attempted to problems that are common to all.*

George Bereday (1920-1983) has emphasized the importance of methodology Comparative Education, through which lessons (for

improving the own, home education system) could be deduced from the variations in educational practices in different societies. In his classic book, *Comparative Method in Education* (1964) he describes Comparative Education as *making sense out of the similarities and differences among educational systems. It catalogues educational methods across national frontiers and in this catalogue each country appears as one variant of the total store of mankind's educational experiences.*

Phillip E. Jones, an Australian comparativist, too attaches importance to using the methodol of Comparative Education for educational planning. He notes that Comparative Education with its rapidly increasing resources and its hope for better methods seems admirably suited to provide a more rational basis for the planning of education.

Edmund J. King (1914-2002), in his book *Comparative Studies and Educational Decision* is takes the planning angle, when he expresses the view that Comparative Education is a discipline, which systematizes our observations and conclusions in relation to the shaping of the future. To him this world now is no longer possible to find the solutions of any educational or social problem within that country and thus we are to look for it from other countries, cultures and societies. Comparative education serves this purpose to a considerable extent, at least in the world of education.

For over the past five decades, comparative education theorists have continued to define and redefine the field of comparative education and speculate about its future viability (Wolhuter *et.al.* 2011). As the range of definations demonstrates, the field is diverse, fluid, and responsive to global shifts and needs. It also holds visible positions at universities worldwide. From the foregoing literature it is evident that comparative education does not have one agreed definition. The authors will give the following as his working definition in this book that "*Comparative education is the analytical survey of systems of education across national borders with a view of establishing similarities and differences*". In this view the intention is implied to find the factors that are influencing particular education systems to be the way they are. This would involve analysis of the forces that make for resemblances and differences in a particular education system. The scope of comparative education involves the study of educational system or systems. This would involve aspects of structure, organization, curriculum, financing, adminis-

tration and educational problems such as repetition, dropout, access, urbanization and participation of various groups in education.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

According to Harold J Noah and Max Eckstein (1993), Comparative Education has four purposes:

- To describe educational systems, processes, or outcomes.
- To assist in the development of educational institutions and practices.
- To highlight the relationships between education and society.
- To establish generalized statements about education those are valid in more than one country.

Comparative Education is often incorrectly assumed to exclusively encompass studies that compare two or more different countries. In fact, since its early days researchers in this field have often eschewed such approaches, preferring rather to focus on a single country. Single unit studies (i.e. studies focusing on *one* system of education) dominate Comparative Education research (Wolhuter, 2008: 326). Although this is an apparent negation of the *comparative* in Comparative Education, comparativists frequently advance several reasons why single-unit studies qualify as Comparative Education research. These include that such studies contribute to the field of knowledge of education systems, and that such studies hook onto general concepts employed in Comparative Education research. Still, some large-scale projects have made important findings through explicitly comparative macro analysis of massive data sets. These include the PISA and IEA studies. PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) was established in 1997. Coordinated by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) it undertakes regular tests of 15 year old pupils in the 65 OECD member states. The first of these tests took place in 2000. The objective is to improve educational policy and quality in these countries. Pupils are tested in reading, mathematics and science. The IEA (International Association of Evaluation of Educational Achievement) is an independent international cooperation of national

research institutes and governmental agencies, formed in 1959. The IEA conducts large scale comparative studies on educational achievement. Studies include the International Computer Information Literacy Study, the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), PIRLS (reading literacy study), ICCS (civic and citizenship Education study) and TEDSM (Mathematics teacher education study).

The scope of Comparative Education could be viewed in the following ways. First there is the subject matter/content perspective which covers the essential components of educational systems such as aims, content or curriculum, administration, financing, teacher education and structure. Secondly, there is the geographical unit/area study perspective which comprises intra-national, international, regional, continental and global or world systems studies and analysis. Intra-national studies involve studies done within a nation. The national studies may involve several nations within a region or a continent. Then there is also the ideological approach, which compares countries educational systems on the basis of differing political, social and economic ideologies that are followed. The national philosophy in a country influences the kind of the education that is provided. This can further be affected by the political party manifestoes that propagate a particular ideology. The Socialist countries have used socialism as the main ideology that is followed in their countries and this has affected the education system in those countries. On the other hand Western countries have used several ideologies such as pragmatism, nationalism and democracy in furthering their educational ideals. The thematic scope focuses on themes, topical issues or problems and compares them within one or more geographical units. This can further be done by analysing of a topical issue in education and understanding it. Lastly the special/historical scope deals with the study of historical development of education.

RATIONALE FOR THE FIELD

Many important educational questions can best be examined from an international-comparative perspective. For example, in the United States of America there is no nationwide certificate of completion of secondary education. This raises the question of what the advantages and disadvantages are of leaving such certification and even the choice not to have such a public examination to each of the 50 states.

Comparative Education draws on the experience of countries such as Japan and France to show how a centralized system works, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of centralized certification. This information could then be used to improve the home or own education system.

PURPOSE OF STUDYING COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

There are various reasons why Comparative Education should be studied by prospective teachers and reformers of education in any country of the world. The reasons are:

- *Description* The most basic utility of comparative education is to describe education systems/learning communities, within their social context, in order to satisfy the yearning for knowledge which is part of human nature. The most basic utility of Comparative Education is to describe education systems 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/Interpreting/Explaining* On the next level Comparative Education also satisfies the need to understand: education systems are explained or understood from surrounding contextual forces which shape them. Conversely if education systems are also 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) thesis of "education as the touch stone of society" is very topical here. In this respect the value of Comparative Education is very topical in times of multicultural societies and of Intercultural Education.
- *Evaluation* Comparative education serves the purpose of evaluating education systems: the own education system as well as universal evaluation of education systems. In the current age of competitive globalised world, the evaluation of the domestic

education projects assumes even bigger importance-hence the proliferation of studies such as the PISA (International Programme for the Assessment of Student Achievement) and IEA(International Educational Assessment) studies, and the international ranking of the 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 possibilities of the societal effects of education.

- *Intellectual* Comparative education is an intellectual activity that scholars can pursue to the highest level possible in the academic ladder. They can pursue it in their masters and doctoral programmes. An individual can do this in order to enhance his/her intellectual capacity concerning other systems of education with the purpose of enlightenment. This knowledge would help the individual to understand their education system better and that of others with the intention of improving and solving problem in their own system. Knowledge for its own sake is the sole ground upon which comparative education need to make a stand in order to merit inclusion among other academic fields.
- *Planning* Modern societies have come to appreciate the importance of planning. Various problems that are associated with over-population, under production, diseases, economic non-viability, industrialization and social ills can be tackled through planning. Planning requires careful formulation of objectives, establishment of priorities and the identification of the means to achieve those objectives. Since an educational policy affects millions of people, rational decisions need to be made so that the policy can achieve the desired results. Comparative education is also pursued to design anew education system, to plan education, and to reform education systems (Steyn and Wolhuter 2010). In reforming or improving the education system or in grappling with an educational issue, challenge or problem, one country could benefit from the experience of other countries that once had faced the same problem, could reveal the full extent and implication of the problem and possible contributory causes; and could also suggest possible solutions to the problem. This call for proper planning that comparative education can provide a helping hand.

- *Practicability* We are living in a practical age in which education is regarded as a consumer good. The pattern of education, which loses its practicability, goes on being replaced by such patterns, which have practical utility. Those patterns of education that have no practical utility are being reformed. For example, in United Kingdom the state supported primary schools whose objectives was to teach the masses how to read and write, so as to enable them work better in the industrial society. These systems have survived with modification and improvements. In the former USSR and China work experience was emphasized and was very much reflected in the curriculum. In United States of America, comprehensive schools on the principle of utility and practicability have replaced grammar schools. In Kenya the education system was reformed in 1985 with a view to make it more practical. There were various arguments that had shown that the education system was more elitist and had no practical utility to the pupils involved. The problem of reforming an education system to make it more practical and of utility must be studied for solutions and this can be done better through the study of comparative education. More over, recently there have appeared a number of publications proclaiming the value of Comparative Education in assisting the teachers to improve his/her teaching practice. Comparative Education 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 multi-cultural classrooms.
- *Humanitarian viewpoint* The original inspiration source of the scholarly field of Comparative Education, the philanthropic ideal of the time of Jullien (1775-1848) remains the most noble cause in comparative education. Serving and improving the state of humanity is in the current age of globalisation more urgent than ever by nurturing a global citizen, equipped with a creative, critical and caring mind set. The current world is characterized by increasing problems that are affecting the human population in various ways. Many parts of the world are or have recently been affected by wars, such as Iraq, Togo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Dufur region in Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The problems experienced in these countries do affect their neigh-

bours and other countries of the world in various ways. For example the Gulf War of 1991 affected the world oil prices just as had happened in 1971 during the crisis in the Middle East. This episode was later repeated during the war between the United States of America and Iraq in 2003. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Right by the United Nations assembly in 1948; people have aspired for peace, freedom, equality and a better life. Education has been highlighted as a human right and need to be accessed to all irrespective of age. Most of the countries in the world are aspiring to provide education to their masses. Countries like Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda are providing universal primary education. However, the economic and social implication of providing education to the masses is not well known. Nations need to co-operate in order to create better world. Therefore, the knowledge of each other education system is necessary and can better be acquired through comparative education.

- *Education problems in world perspective* Most countries of the world have identical problems in their educational perspective. Therefore, it is possible for them to learn lessons from each other on how they resolved a particular problem. For example when Kenya was implementing her free primary education in 2003, Nigeria could have provided some of the clues of the problems, which were to be expected, and the solutions to them. Uganda, a close neighbour to Kenya also implemented her universal primary education earlier and she could have provided Kenya with practical solutions on how she managed her problems. Other lessons could have been learnt from Cuba on how she managed to obtain total literacy while India has problems in achieving it. These countries can provide important lessons to Kenya during her implementation of free primary education. Also, one would want to know how nations have struggled to establish media of instruction. The comparative approach would yield a deeper understanding of educational problems and their solutions. In this era, the purpose of Comparative Education would be better understanding of the changed circumstances and to have better equipments to fulfil the new responsibilities. This will help in understanding of why some countries education systems are

progressive while others are backward. The administrative system of the land influences the state of the educational system. For example the administrative machineries of Switzerland, Canada, U.S.A. and Japan are combined with local autonomy and decentralized control. Consequently, in the educational system of these countries, we find a reflection of their political philosophy. Thus the political philosophy and administrative systems of various countries determine the administration and control of education.

- *Innovation in education* There are many innovations, which are being introduced to education today. The development of technology has facilitated new methods of organizing learning. For example the use of Radio and Television to deliver knowledge, use of other aspects of the media, Open University, African Virtual University (AVU) and computer assisted distance learning has been introduced to education. All these have facilitated education in a comparative context. The U.S.A. system has facilitated the spread of innovations in education in the world. In most of the developing countries distance education with the use of computer assisted learning is viewed as the panacea of educational access and the associated problems. In this regard the main problem to scarcity of qualified teachers in most of the developing countries would be whether the new technology would replace the real teachers in the classroom settings.
- *Economics of education* Much of the massive expansion in the provision of education since the middle of the twentieth century took place on the basis of the belief that the provision of education results in economic growth and increased economic productivity. In the recent year's research has generated the realization that the spread of education is positively correlated with increasing productivity. For example the former U.S.S.R. set out to improve her economy by taking as a first step the eradication of illiteracy. Also, all the developed countries have progressed by investing more in education. On the other hand most of the developing countries have generated the problem of educated unemployment or brain drain by improving their education systems. The belief in the value of education as instrument to effect economic growth took off in the second half of the twentieth

century. This belief was spurred by the publication of a book and the formulation of a new theory. F.Harbison and C.A.Myer published their book *Education, Manpower and Economic Growth* in 1964. This book was based on a correlation between educational enrolment ratios and the level of economic development of 75 countries in the world. In 1961, Theodor W. Schultz, in his presidential address to the American Association of Economists, explained his theory of human capital. This theory, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1979, saw education as a productive investment, and no longer as a consumption item as it has been seen in history up to that point in time. This theory resulted in a revolution in Economic thought and in thought in Education alike (cf. Sobel. 1982). While the subsequent experience of more than half a century of educational expansion has proved this belief in the economic returns to educational investment very naïve and simplistic, and economic expansion should not be the only reason for the provision and expansion of education; much of the expansion in education worldwide takes place in the belief that education will effect economic growth, and can countries learn a lot from each other regarding the use of education to effect economic growth.

- *Education for international understanding.* International understanding is a central purpose for studying comparative education. The two world wars made man to seek even more seriously the various ways of promoting international understanding. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have recognized that wars begin from the minds of men. Therefore, in order to stop another war from occurring international understanding is essential so that national pride can be curtailed in the people's minds. This was the spirit of the League of Nations in 1921; International Bureau of Education in 1925 and Commission of Intellectual Cooperation in 1926. To deal with labour problems and education, International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have been established. The declaration of human rights by United Nations Organization (UNO) as a way of enhancing peace has contributed to international understanding. Unilateral and multilateral co-operation programmes

have been developed to promote international understanding. Education is seen as the possible way to enhance international understanding. To understand other nations of the world, their philosophies of life, education, culture and sociology and to understand the forces, be they geographical, cultural, local and religious influencing their life, to know more about their customs, traditions and culture is absolutely essential. An understanding of how these cultures are affecting education systems, and how these cultures are shaped by education is important for the development of clear concept of internationalism. Exchanging students, teachers and other social workers is intended to promote the international systems of education.

- *Relax national pride* This is necessary for combat feelings of superiority, especially among the populations of countries technologically and economically developed and with military prowess. They need to understand that other countries are essential for their sustenance and therefore have to work for mutual benefit of each other. As Kubow and Fossum (2007), comparative thinking and international perspectives taking are essential for citizens to get along in diverse, global society. Comparison challenges students to suspend judgment of these foreign systems that they might base on their limited and localized perspectives. Through the development of comparative thinking skills, students should be able to undertake analyses of their home cultures and systems with a more nuanced understanding of various cultural factors at play. Comparative education also encourages students and educators to ask, "What kinds of educational policy, planning, and teaching are appropriate for what kind of society?" The field of Comparative Education focuses our attention on what might be the appropriate and inappropriate policy, while fostering awareness of the ideologies underlying educational practice. Hence, comparative study can also cultivate a political consciousness.

It has been explained above that Comparative Education studies operate on different geographical levels. The utility and value of Comparative Education at the different levels of the global level, the

supra-national, the national, the sub-national, the institutional, the class and the individual level will now, in conclusion be illustrated.

On a global level, the significance of Comparative Education has been raised by the phenomenon of globalization. For example, according to Larsen *et al.* (2008: 148) and O'Sullivan (2008: 140) globalization has resulted in a renaissance of Comparative Education in teacher education programs at respectively Canadian and Irish universities. Comparative Education identifies and describes world trends and movements in education (Tretheway, 1976: 34). Forces of globalization have acted upon education internationally, creating greater uniformity and standardization (Philips & Schweisfurth, 2006: 42). Planet-wide societal (economic, political, social and technological) forces have come to shape education, and need to be taken cognizance of in order to understand education. Comparativists involve themselves in the universal evaluation of education systems globally i.a. by assessing how these systems live up to global trends and challenges of the twenty-first century. The *Millennium Developmental Goals* and the campaign for *Education for All* are global education policies. Similarly, global initiatives such as universal adult literacy, the *Millennium Development Goals* and *Education for All* call for the expertise of comparativists to assist with educational planning in order to achieve these goals. In the global village taking shape, other fields/disciplines of educational studies, such as Philosophy of Education, History of Education and Sociology of Education are transcending any parochialism and constructing global frames of reference. The refinement of such an edifice creates another niche for Comparative Education to use by enunciating the relations and interrelations between global society and education, and by explicating the remaining roles of context in shaping education. Current world wide trends such as the information and communication revolution, the technological revolution, and the neo-liberal economic revolution at the same time hold the possibility of dragging humanity in the twenty-first century to new, unfathomed depths, and the promise to uplift humanity to unprecedented planes; placing at the door of Comparative Education the assignment of helping education to steer the world towards the latter.

The most obvious current example of the significance of Comparative Education on the supra-national level is with respect to the nascent European Union. Therefore, for instance, at the University of Athens a

course called "European Integration: An educational challenge" exists, explicating and explaining to student teachers the uniformisation of education in an integrated Europe (Popov & Wolhuter, 2007: 367). At the African University of Zimbabwe, Comparative Education is taught as part of the courses "African Studies I and II", elective courses open to students from any faculty (Machingura & Mutumeri, 2006: 94). The aim of Comparative Education in these courses is to explicate education within the context of the African continent. According to Bray and Thomas (1995: 474), a substantial amount of literature focuses on the nature of educational provision in different regions of the world. Such regions include, besides the European Union, also for example the Balkan States, South Eastern Europe. Regional units are constructed on one or more (educational or contextual) characteristics common to the region. Such characteristics obtain increased significance if they distinguish the particular region from other regions. Characteristics can include level of educational development, goals of education, forms of educational administration, institutional fabric of educational institutions, or contextual characteristics such as political organisation, colonial history, cultural origin, or level of economic development. For a complete understanding of national systems of education and individual institutions, it is necessary to turn to regional forces. Regional foci also enlarge the geographic range of educational planning and philanthropic activities.

The level of the nation-state is, of course, the level at which the overwhelming majority of published Comparative Education studies occurs (*cf.* Wolhuter, 2008: 325). Here Comparative Education studies describe and explain (from societal forces shaping education systems) national education systems. There is a wide-spread contention among comparativists that the study and comprehension of foreign education systems facilitates a fuller understanding of the own education system (Mallinson, 1975: 10; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006: 14). In a recent survey of students' motivations for studying Comparative Education, Comparative Education students in Bulgaria cited that it will assist them in comprehending their own national education system (Mihova, 2008). Comparative Education research assists with the evaluation of national education systems. IEA and PISA study results, for example, are published in the form of national aggregates. Comparative Education research invokes the educational experience of foreign countries to

guide educational reform projects in the home country. National level studies in the field of Comparative Education can also be of value to other fields of educational inquiry. Combinations of national, political, social and economic forces result in configurations of societies discernible at national level, and by explicating such national education-societal interrelationships, Comparative Education yields valuable information to the field of Sociology of Education. It is when an education system requires a nation-wide change that Comparative Education serves the philanthropic ideal at national level. Many studies of institutions such as IIEP (International Institute for Educational Planning) are , for this reason, on a national level.

Current worldwide societal trends of the demise of the once omnipotent nation-state, the resulting decentralisation, and the rise of multicultural societies, bring the sub-national category as level of comparative analysis to the fore. In Germany, for example, the challenge of the educational handling of the substantial number of immigrant (guest worker) children, in the second half of the twentieth century played a pivotal role in the rise of Comparative Education as a field of teaching in German universities and in the rise of Comparative Education as an organised field of scholarly inquiry in Germany - in fact, the name of the German Comparative Education Society is *Sektion International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft* (Section of International and Intercultural Comparative Education) (Waterkamp, 2008: 66). A paradigm such as feministic studies reveals the experience of women in education, and understanding this experience is the first step towards re-designing education systems and teaching practice to rectify any wrong. It is also by assessing equity in educational systems, not only with respect to the trinity gender, ethnicity/race and socio-economic status, but also with respect to other, newer, contemporary dimensions of diversity, that Comparative Education plays its part in evaluating education systems. A more positive message emanates from studies in the paradigm of cultural revitalisation. The cultural revitalisation paradigm focuses on deliberative efforts by members of a society to create a more satisfying culture, both at local and national levels, by means of educational initiatives (Paulston, 1977: 390). An example is Mojab and Hall's (2003) study of a Kurdish University in Iran. All these sub-national level studies promote the pursuit of social justice as part of the philanthropic ideal.

Turning to the level of the institution, the paradigm of ethnography (focusing on the culture of a particular educational institution), a fuller description of a school or other educational institution could be obtained, as well as a more complete understanding. The same applies to the paradigm of critical ethnography. Maseman (1986: 11) defines critical ethnography as studies which use a basically anthropological, qualitative, participant-observer methodology, but which rely on a body of theory deriving from critical theory for their theoretical foundation, i.e. conflict theories, with the emphasis on power relations in society. The method is mainly participant-observation small scale, but in order to understand the culture and the life of the actors involved, such a study is then placed finally within a wider theoretical framework of reproduction in which the researcher can make statements about the research that they themselves would never say.

In the competitive globalised world of neo-liberal economies (“survival of the fittest”) and decentralisation of power to individual schools, the evaluation of individual schools and lessons that schools can take from best schools internationally assume ever bigger importance. Holik (2008: 81), for example, linked these to the rise of Comparative Education in post-1990 Hungary. There is strong pressure on schools to attain better results (Fidler, 2002: 1). In assisting schools in this regard, Steyn and Wolhuter (2010) have used their Comparative Education expertise to develop a model for strategic planning in schools. The model has been successfully implemented in a number of schools assisting them to improve and to obtain better results.

On the level of the class, once again the paradigms of ethnography (studying the culture of a particular class) and of critical ethnography, as well as the paradigm of ethnomethodology (studying the social dynamics and norms within a particular class) can be valuable in knowing and understanding what is happening at class-room level. Claire Planel (2008) makes a convincing case, illustrated by an empirical study of 10 student teachers from England doing their teaching practice in France, that Comparative Education in teacher education courses should be reconstructed as Comparative Pedagogy (Pedagogy is understood to mean the theory and practices of teaching). In times of increasing multicultural classrooms, comprehensive schools and inclusive education, Planel argues that Comparative Pedagogy is useful and relevant for teachers as it helps to enhance

teachers' understanding of children of diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and thus culminates in more effective teaching and learning, in view of the importance of teaching to have resonance with, to be linked to the life-world of the students.

In an age of individualisation and human rights, the individual level is destined to assume ever increasing importance in Comparative Education. It is here where the paradigms of phenomenology and phenomenography come into play. Phenomenology limits the scope of ethnomethodology even further, from the classroom to the individual. Individuals and their experiences of situations and contexts, and especially the meanings they attached to these situations and contexts are studied. An example is Milligan's (2003) research on how education influences the forming of identity under Philippine children. Phenomenography (a method, which was established by Tenorth Marton and his research associates in Sweden), as phenomenology attempts to reconstruct individuals' experience and attachment of meaning to phenonema, but unlike phenomenologists' strict limitation to each individual's experience and attachment of meaning as being unique, phenomenography goes over to attempt to classify individual experiences and attachment of meaning. An example is Brew's (2001) study on how seniors experience research. The philanthropic ideal ultimately means the maximum quality of life for every individual, hence the significance of comparative studies at the level of the individual.

The above explicated (potential) of Comparative Education amounts to a tall order, a by no means insignificant assignment; contributing to the coming to fruition of the ideal that every one of the global population of 7 billion people receives an education ensuring quality of life for him/her. As mapped out in the previous chapter, there is huge scope for the evolving field of Comparative Education to expand, to rise to the occasion.

ACTIVITIES

- i. Using your own words define the words comparative education.
- ii. Discuss the advantages of prospective teachers studying Comparative Education.
- iii. How can you, as a teacher in the classroom, make profitable use of Comparative Education?

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