For nearly half a century, research on education systems has been increasingly popular. However, this popularity was long restricted primarily to internationally linked policy makers and education planners, often backed up by international organizations such the OECD but also by governmental or para-governmental organizations within the individual countries.

These institutional affiliations provided education research with a specific character that often centres on notions such as excellence, efficiency, or standards. The specific comparative character of this policy-driven research agenda triggered the development of suitable research techniques such as comparative statistics and pertinent sub-disciplines such as cognitive psychology. Backed-up by powerful global institutions, this agenda purported to be rather unique, and it tended to ignore the cultural complexity of the educational field and those research approaches that address this complexity.

This volume includes different historical, cultural, and sociological approaches to the education systems and to questions as to how research on education systems can be undertaken beyond the parameters of the existing research agenda. They demonstrate how pertinent problems of research on education systems can only be tackled taking an international and interdisciplinary approach with regard to both research questions and methods concerning education systems.
EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
The Future of Education Research

Volume 1

One characteristic of modern societies is that they are likely to assign their social problems to education. Arising in the specific context of the late eighteenth century, this ‘educational reflex’ paved the way for education to become an important social factor on regional, national and global scales. Witnesses for this upswing are for instance the expansion of compulsory schooling, the state organization and tertiarization of teacher education and thus the introduction of education departments in the universities.

However, in contrast to the social artefact of modern societies – pluralism in languages, cultures, values, and customs – education research seems in many respects still committed to ideas of unity or uniformity: for instance, the global standardization movement fosters uniformity in curriculum and content to serve the purpose of dominant global evaluation schemes, which in turn are based on the idea of human cognition as an immutable arrangement of mental processes with regard to learning. Moreover, critics of these developments often argue with arguments and convictions that can be traced back to the time when the education sciences emerged in the context of the cultural and political idea of the uniform national state.

Obviously, today’s education research often operates using concepts that are derived from ideas of unity and uniformity in order to tackle the challenges of cultural and linguistic plurality in the context of democratic societies. This is both a paradox and an occasion to reflect upon the present and future role of education research in the context of modern societies in four attempts: 

- Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives (Vol. 1);
- Multimodality and Multilingualism: Current Challenges for Education Studies (Vol. 2);
- Professionalization of Actors in Education Domains (Vol. 3);
- Education and Learning in Non-Formal Contexts (Vol. 4).
Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives

Edited by

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One characteristic of modern societies is that they are likely to assign their social problems to education. Arising in the specific context of the late eighteenth century, this ‘educational reflex’ paved the way for education to become an important social factor on local, regional, national and global scales. Witnesses for this upswing are, for instance, the expansion of compulsory schooling, the state organization and tertiarization of teacher education and thus the introduction of education departments in the universities, and the introduction of certificates for both students and teachers.

However, in contrast to the social artefact of modern societies – pluralism in languages, cultures, values, and customs, the education sciences seem in many respects still committed to ideas of unity or uniformity: For instance, the global standardization movement fosters uniformity in curriculum and content to serve the purpose of dominant global evaluation schemes. These schemes in turn are based on the idea of human cognition as an immutable arrangement of mental processes with regard to learning. And the critics of these developments often argue with motives, arguments, and convictions that can be traced back to the time when the education sciences emerged in the context of the cultural and political idea of the uniform (and of course superior) national state. In other words: Today, the education sciences often operate using concepts that are derived from ideas of unity and uniformity in order to tackle the challenges of cultural and linguistic plurality in the context of democratic societies. This is obviously both a paradox and an occasion to reflect upon the present and future role of the education sciences in the context of modern societies.

With over 40% of inhabitants not having Luxembourg passports, Luxembourg is a multinational and thus a multilingual and multicultural society. With its three official languages Luxembourgish, German, French, and with Portuguese as the first language of nearly 20% of the inhabitants, it is also a multilingual society. Against this background, Luxembourg is predestined to evaluate ‘educational reflex’ mentioned above, the assigning of social problems to education. The University of Luxembourg, which defines itself as “multilingual, international and strongly focused on research”, responded to this desideratum by making “Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts” a Research Priority in the frame of its current four-year plan (2010-2013).

One particular challenge of this research priority is the self-reflection or critical self-evaluation of the education sciences in the context of the social expectations concerning education. Therefore, one of the major aims of “Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts” was to assess the future of education research jointly with outstanding international scholars. The 2010-2013
lecture series “The Future of Education Research” is an integral part of this research priority. Here the international discussion is not restricted to questions regarding technical feasibility and methods of educational ambitions. Self-reflection or critical self-evaluation meant precisely to refrain from compliant adoptions of research desiderata defined by stakeholders of political, cultural, religious, or developmental institutions and to be engaged in the (self-) critical assessment of the legitimacy and general feasibility of educational desiderata, that is, of social expectations emerging from the educational reflex. Education research was defined not simply as a service towards fulfilling social expectations but like any other academic discipline as a field in which its actors, the researchers, define the appropriateness of its research agenda – research questions and methods – in the realm of their peers.

With these premises, the future of education research is defined to be international, self-reflexive, and interdisciplinary and to include a broad range of traditional academic disciplines, such as the education sciences in the narrower sense, psychology, sociology, linguistics, history, political sciences, cognitive sciences, and neurology sciences. And it is meant to focus on the macro, meso, and micro levels of education questions and problems analytically, empirically, and historically. The invited international colleagues addressed their respective scholarship to the topic under consideration, the future of education research, in one of four lecture series at the University of Luxembourg from 2010 to 2013. In accordance with the interdisciplinary approach, the relevant questions were not clustered around traditional disciplines but around several focal points, resulting in this series of the following four volumes to be published from 2011 to 2014:

- *Education Systems in Historical, Cultural, and Sociological Perspectives* (Vol. 1)
- *Multimodality and Multilingualism: Current Challenges for Education Studies* (Vol. 2)
- *Professionalization of Actors in Education Domains* (Vol. 3)
- *Education and Learning in Non-Formal Contexts* (Vol. 4)

We greatly appreciate the support of the University of Luxembourg and extend thanks for the opportunity to establish a Research Priority dedicated to “Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts”, within which the lecture series “The Future of Education Research” is being held. We are grateful to all the excellent international scholars participating in this research discussion. And last but not least, we sincerely thank Peter de Liefde of Sense Publishers for his support of this series and for giving us, by means of publication, the opportunity to open up this discussion on a more global level.

Walferdange, Luxembourg, August 2011

Daniel Tröhler, head of the Research Priority “Education and Learning in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts”, University of Luxembourg
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INTRODUCTION

For nearly half a century, research on education systems has been increasingly popular. However, this popularity was long restricted primarily to internationally linked policy makers and education planners, often backed up by international organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, or the OECD but also by governmental (for instance, the US Department of Education) or para-governmental organizations within the individual countries (for instance, the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Germany).

These institutional affiliations provided education research with a specific character that often centres on notions such as excellence, efficiency, or standards. The specific comparative character of this policy-driven research agenda triggered the development of suitable research techniques such as comparative statistics and pertinent sub-disciplines such as cognitive psychology. The global concern behind these research endeavours has created a relatively new field for trained educationalists, psychologists, sociologists, and economists in the intersection of policy, politics, and education systems comprised of stakeholders from outside the universities. And those chairs of education that were devoted to policy analysis – less often found in Europe than in the United States and Canada – have shared the logic of the given agenda. Backed-up by powerful global institutions and selected chairs of education, this agenda purported to be rather unique, and it tended to ignore the cultural complexity of the educational field and those research approaches that address this complexity.

However, research outside this policy-driven agenda has been rather hesitant to accept more open-form approaches and questions concerning how education systems perform, how they are influenced by and interact with national, international, and global education policy, and how they react and adapt to change. It is only in the context of comparative sociology and comparative education that some aspects of the issues at stake were raised in the late 1970s for the first time. However, questions as to how research on education systems can be undertaken beyond the parameters of the existing research agenda have not been discussed on a large scale. This desideratum was the reason for choosing to dedicate the first round of lectures in the University of Luxembourg’s 2010-2013 lecture series “The Future of Education Research” to the topic of how education systems can be investigated in the context of an academic policy-driven agenda.

The new approach to research brings up problems that can only be tackled taking an international and interdisciplinary approach. It was therefore our privilege to invite outstanding international scholars in different academic disciplines to present ideas about research questions and methods concerning education systems. Due to the cutting-edge nature of this research the invitation
was quite open. After the lectures series, the editors of this volume clustered the individual contributions in pairs. A different structuring would certainly have been imaginable, but we believe that this order of presentation will also serve the triggering of an international discussion.

The first two chapters in this volume deal with methodological approaches in education research. Fritz Osterwalder’s chapter on “Education Programmes, Education Reforms, and The Longue Durée in Historiography of Education” shows that educational institutions are characterized by strong invariance and a high level of complexity. From the longue durée perspective, Osterwalder analyzes the education policy debates during the French Revolution in comparison with the debates on education reforms in Switzerland in the late twentieth century. Based on the historical analysis, Osterwalder concludes that present-day education policy should envision the length of reform processes much more strongly than it usually does. Osterwalder’s historical approach is complemented by the second methodological chapter in this volume: In “Edging Closer to the Hero, the Barbarian, and the Stranger”, Robert Cowen strongly criticizes the traditional work agenda of comparative education, which has emphasized finding solutions to urgent education policy issues for governments. Cowen argues that an academic university-based comparative education can use specific ‘unit ideas’ to understand the changing shapes of ‘education’ and its international transfer. Cowen concludes by suggesting that fresh thinking about how changing notions of ‘the hero, the barbarian, and the stranger’ are inscribed in education systems would be a considerable and intellectually liberating challenge.

The next two chapters in this volume focus on reforms in education governance, on the shift from input steering to output steering. In the chapter “New Governance of Education”, Helmut Fend takes a comparative look at the reform processes undertaken after PISA in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The redesigning of the German education system tends to be narrated as a success story. A critical look at the experiences of the United States shows that high-stakes testing did not have the intended effects. Fend stresses the importance of recognizing the culturally determined functionality of the education system in order to determine and explore the limits and opportunities of education reforms. In “The Global Language on Education Policy and Prospects of Education Research”, Daniel Tröhler focuses first on the anti-communist campaign during the Cold War and uncovers its inherent educational character and its technocratic ideology with regard to schooling. Over time, this has become a global ideology; it shifts the traditional input character of education policy towards output steering as a result of failed governance success in the United States. Tröhler’s analysis makes a plea for an internationalization of the obviously overstrained and often nationally biased education sciences.

The next pair of chapters focuses on ‘successes’ of education and education reforms from a historical perspective. David F. Labaree’s chapter, “When is School an Answer to What Social Problems”, describes one of the rather rare success stories of schools: the establishment of the American common school system at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The aim was nothing less than to create a new
social order in response to the political, moral, and social crisis in the United States. But according to Labaree, this early success is at the same time the end of success stories, for every subsequent project attempted by school systems has failed. In contrast to the success story described by Labaree, in the chapter “The History of Higher Education” Anne Rohstock describes how steadfastly universities encounter harmonization processes and remain resistant to reform processes. By historicizing the reasons and circumstances for the failure of most of the reform programmes in Europe especially in the 1960s and 1970s, Rohstock shows that the ‘Bologna Process’ and the debates surrounding it can only be understood in a historical context. Rohstock therefore formulates a proposal for the development of a ‘history of higher education’.

The next two contributions use an applied approach, one considering discourse and the other considering Web 2.0 modalities as systems to help analyze education systems. In “The Past and the Future of Education Research on Inequalities”, Inés Dussel discusses how education policies have to be examined along the lines of the concrete pedagogies and imaginaries at the school level. Whereas some strands of education research have tended to think of policies and schools as two separate levels, Dussel aims to highlight their interconnections. Studying recent, significant efforts to combat inequalities in education, particularly at the secondary level, Dussel shows that the efforts have been accompanied by new pedagogical discourses that reshape what counts as school knowledge and what the functions of schooling are. In the chapter “Web 2.0 and the Future of Education Research”, Lynn Fendler examines research on Web 2.0 technologies and shows that education research tends to view technological developments through rose-colored glasses and with utopian aspirations. Education research has not yet adopted a critical analytical stance toward technology, despite the fact that Web 2.0 has transformed the landscape of information technology in education systems. Fendler stresses that a more critical perspective on educational technology would open up new questions for epistemology, pedagogy, communication, and political power relations in education.

The final pair of chapters reflects future perspectives of knowledge-driven societies. In “Education, Knowledgeability, and the Labour Market”, Nico Stehr makes reference to the issue called the ‘productivity paradox’, which is widely debated among economists. One of the most significant reasons for the productivity paradox can perhaps be found in the transformation of the modern economy into a knowledge-intensive economy and the attendant transformation of the labour market and the world of work. Stehr investigates the hypothesis that the productivity paradox is linked to the growth of the number of knowledge-based workers in the modern economy and the expectations that these strata bring to the world of work, enhancing the importance of the supply of rather the demand for specific skills and cognitive capacities. Finally, in “The Past as the Future of the Social and Education Sciences”, Thomas S. Popkewitz describes the social sciences as a research approach that plans and designs the child, the family, and community. This research approach is neither empirical nor practical. Instead, it joins utopian narratives in the name of democracy, the common good, and the
nation. Practices of science are not merely descriptions of the world but interventions that modify that world. Popkewitz’s chapter points to an alternative strategy – namely, a history of the present that directs our attention to the historical conditions that made possible social science projects for planning and designing people in orthodox approaches to education research.

We are grateful to all colleagues from the United States, Argentina, England, Germany, Switzerland, and Luxembourg for their participation in this discussion. We hope that this volume will be able to establish that this research topic is not just one among others but that its reality affects the very conditions under which we work. In this regard this research field is of paramount topical interest.

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I. Methods
FRITZ OSTERWALDER

EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, EDUCATION REFORMS, AND THE LONGUE DURÉE IN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION

In order to receive a clear and definite impression of a demonstration, the observer must perform certain actions. First he must climb upon a roof of a house to get a view from above of a procession as a whole and measure its dimension; next he must come down and look out through the first-floor window at the inscriptions carried by the demonstrators; finally, he must mingle with the crowd to gain an idea of the outward appearance of the participants. (Pudovkin, 1926, quoted in Kracauer, 1969/1995, p. 122)

In this statement Vsevolod Pudovkin (1893-1953) explains his concept of changing perspectives. A Soviet film director and actor, Pudovkin became famous in 1926 for his film Mother, with its groundbreaking montage. Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966), who was a cultural and film historian, used this Pudovkin quotation in his posthumously published treatise on historiography as a metaphor for the structuring of the universe in historiography: “The big can be adequately rendered only by a permanent movement from the whole to some detail, then back to the whole, etc.” (Kracauer, 1969/1995, p. 122).

For Kracauer (1969/1995), the same change of perspective as for space holds true for the historiographer’s dealings with time. Historiography of enclosed periods, epochs, and events that constitute spatio-temporal units must be placed against the foil of the “long stretch” of history in irreversible chronological time. Only in this way can certain relationships in a given time period be made visible. And only in this way can it be revealed just how much by chance the connections arose (p. 179).

Kracauer developed his film view of history in 1958. During that same period Braudel published a paper titled “La longue durée” (“History and the Social Sciences: The Long Durée”), in which he presented the importance of the three levels of historiographic time: the slow time of sociocultural changes, or longue durée; the medium-term trends that define a particular period of history, the èpoque; and the short-term the events of the day that shape the course of current affairs (Braudel, 1958).

Historiography has developed fruitfully since then. It connects the macro-perspective and micro-perspective and also spatio-temporal periods and chronological time (Vovelle, 2006). But in the history of education it is different: Separate, enclosed historical time periods continue to be the main perspective exclusively. I will show this in the first section of this chapter, taking two examples that lie far apart in history: the history of education accounts of the...
French Revolution, and the expansion of education in Switzerland in recent times. In the second and third sections, I will connect these examples with the idea of the longue durée. In the conclusion, I will examine what can be gained from, what the added value is, of this change in perspectives.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION REFORMS AS HISTORICAL EVENTS IN SEPARATE, ENCLOSED TIME PERIODS

For the eventful phase of the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799, from the storming of the Bastille to Napoleon’s coup d’État, a bibliography of independent publications on the topic of education (Harten, 1989) lists 1,367 texts. Thirty percent of these are treatises dealing with the organization, political supervision, and conducting of teaching and instruction, 53% of the texts focus more narrowly on the instruction itself, textbooks, and 14% address more general issues in education and instruction (Harten, 1990, p. 121).

Also important were the debates in the constituent assemblies, the parliaments, and parliamentary committees. This development began at first quite harmlessly. The decrees of the Assemblée constituante at the end of 1789 put the state very generally in charge of l’éducation publique et l’enseignement politique et moral (Baczko, 2000, p. 58). The real political debate began in 1791, when all teachers were obligated to swear an oath to their civil duty, prêter le serment civique. Teachers refusing to do so risked dismissal. During this same time, the first large reform plans were published. Worthy of mention is a project by Gabriel Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau, one of the most eminent among the revolutionary parliament members. The project called for a complete reorganization of schools and education in a code d’éducation publique (Baczko, 2000). Another work published at the same time was Cinq Mémoires sur l’Instruction publique (Condorcet, 1791/1989) by Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, the Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), who was a mathematician, permanent secretary of the Académie des Sciences, and colleague of Turgot; the work was published in the periodical Bibliothèque de l’Homme Public.

The Constituent Assembly took up this impetus immediately. In its draft constitution for the constitutional monarchy on September 4, 1791, it established for all of France and for all citizens (men only) universal instruction publique:

Il sera créé et organisé une instruction publique commune à tous les citoyens, gratuite à l’égard des parties d’enseignement indispensables pour tous les hommes et dont les établissements seront distribués graduellement dans un rapport combiné avec la division du royaume (Baczko, 2000, p. 107).

This perspective was explained in an extensive educational proposal read out before the Assemblée Nationale on September 10 and 11 by Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754-1838) (Talleyrand-Périgord, 1791/2000, pp. 107-176). The newly elected parliament set up a Comité d’instruction publique under the chairmanship of Condorcet. In April 1792 the committee presented a detailed report to parliament and even a draft bill for the establishment of a universal public
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, EDUCATION REFORMS, AND THE LONGUE DURÉE

education system. The future public education system would encompass five levels, from primary schools in all villages up to the Société Nationale [National Society of Science and the Arts], the new academy (Condorcet, 1792/2000, pp. 218-246). The schools at the lowest level were to be open to all children, and advancement was to be meritocratic.

Due to this draft bill, education and school were very important in revolutionary France. At the centre of interest was mostly the elementary school, which would be open to all, with either voluntary or compulsory attendance. In parliament projects were proposed, reports prepared, and legislation drafted. Interest was so great that the parliamentary sessions on Thursdays were reserved for education problems (Baczko, 2000). Also these debates, proposals, and decisions are very well documented; in the modern edition by James Guillaume they fill 17 massive volumes (Guillaume, 1997).

In the literature, the wealth of debates, discussion, and concepts of this period are said to be a “cultural revolution” (Harten, 1990, p. 122). But for the historiography it is clear that with regard to the development of the elementary school institutions, the debates were sterile! No real changes were made; the French Revolution did not have the financial means to make them (Julia, 1990, p. 72). It also lacked the required administrative structures. It certainly did not have the support of the teachers, and there was no teacher education.

The utopian goals could not be achieved in principle; they even acted as a deterrent (Harten, 1990). As Julia (1990) pointed out, it was only in the following phase of development, when the goals called “utopian” were shelved, that realistic objectives were achieved. In the Napoleonic phase of the revolution, the emphasis was on developing higher education. The revolutionary plans for the reform of elementary education were abandoned until taken up again by the minister of public instruction in the Third Republic, Jules Ferry, in 1879.

All in all, the Revolution and its programs on development of the lower school system are judged to be low or totally nonexistent. That is how the historiography sees it. The general conclusion is: lots of proposals but no reforms!

Historiography makes a completely opposite judgment in a different connection: Since the 1970s Switzerland has been fundamentally rebuilding the education system. This development is still continuing today. The catchphrase is Bildungsexpansion [expansion of education]. Three points are important:

– First, the education system experienced massive quantitative growth in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The reasons for this were not only demographic change (the baby boom) and the opening up of higher education to women. In this period, demand also increased generally, and there was noteworthy institutional growth and development.

– New courses of study were instituted, and existing educational institutions were differentiated. To name two examples: Up to 1972 three different Gymnasium (academic-track high-school) diplomas (school-leaving certificates) granted access to Swiss universities: traditional classical languages, modern languages with Latin, and science/mathematics. In 1972 two further school-leaving certificates were recognized (art, economics/law). In 1993 the system was
abolished. Since then, Gymnasium students have had choice in their basic subjects, elective specialization subjects, and supplementary subjects. There are about 150 combinations that grant access to studies at university or university of applied sciences. There is also a new (higher) vocational certificate: Upon completion of the apprenticeship/certificate, students can now enter tertiary level education directly.

- The third point combines the first two. The basic structure of the education system in Switzerland is being changed fundamentally. Previously, advancement was purely meritocratic. The best students advanced (to Gymnasium and university), and the others dropped out. Today, there are various possibilities for tertiary education in Switzerland: the traditional route via Gymnasium and university, or the route via apprenticeship certificate and university of applied sciences. There is also a route via a university of applied sciences and, finally, the familiar route via apprenticeship and examination for the master craftsman’s certificate/diploma. Of all children born in the same year, 95% complete Sekundarstufe II (the upper secondary level). They are all eligible to complete a tertiary level (this is presented schematically in Osterwalder, 2005).

This development in Switzerland is not yet completed, and it has been little studied so far. Nevertheless, astonishing empirical findings have been reported: The reorganization of the education system in Switzerland was the result of chance. There were many partial reforms, but they were not coordinated. In the opinion of two researchers, there was no comprehensive education-policy “expansion of education” project in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s, and also no national or regional steering of this process can be found (Criblez & Magnin, 2001, p. 8).

This is quite a contrast: In France at the time of the Revolution, it is said there were “lots of proposals but no reforms”. In Switzerland, there have been “lots of changes but no program!”

Are programs and actors not important for the development of educational institutions? That can really not be said, as I will show in the following. The findings on the expansion of education in Switzerland and the reform programs at the time of the French Revolution have something to do with the type of investigation. They are the result of the time horizon of the research perspective. But there is an alternative perspective: the perspective of the longue durée. In the following, I will show this for both examples.

THE EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN THE LONGUE DURÉE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In France, there was great public debate on education long before the Revolution. Originally, education and the school were only secondary issues. The main topic was a theological church policy debate within French Catholicism.

From the start of the seventeenth century, the public was concerned about the conflict between the neo-Augustinian/Gallican, national church orientation and
EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, EDUCATION REFORMS, AND THE LONGUE DURÉE

orientation to the leadership of the Roman Church and the theology of the Jesuit order.

At the end of the seventeenth century, this conflict appeared to have been settled. With the closing and physical razing of the buildings of the convent at Port Royal in 1709 and with the papal bull Unigenitus issued in 1713, the neo-Augustinian/Gallican, national, and national church movement was crushed for the time being. However, the movement subsequently regrouped by the middle of the century. It became a powerful political/religious opposition movement of the urban bourgeoisie and a large part of the Nobles of the Robe (noblesse de robe), aristocrats who owed their rank to judicial or administrative posts. It was a movement against the politics of the royal court. Court politics were identified with the Jesuit order. The royal court severely lost prestige – as regards foreign policy due to colonial wars and concerning home affairs due to the national debt. The religious/political opposition succeeded in obtaining the majority in the local parliaments. The parliaments voted to forbid the Jesuit order to run schools (Palmer, 1985; Van Kley, 1975). The Jesuit order and thus half of the royal court were to have no more influence on the upbringing and education of young persons of the elite class. The king was left with no choice and was forced to follow the parliaments’ ban.

This left one-third of the higher schools in France subject to disposition. A wide-ranging discussion on the contents and the institutional affiliation of the higher schools developed under the keyword Education nationale (for a detailed account of the debate, see Osterwalder, 2007). Intellectual interest in education now stood at the centre of the political orientation.

The debate had its origins in two different church politics orientations. In the winning, heterogeneous party there were now three positions:

– First, the lower school levels were to be included in the discussion on orienting the education system towards the welfare of the nation.
– Second, the question was raised as to whether the differentiation of the education system according to the estates should not be abolished and a united, standard organization built.
– Third, the question was raised as to whether the school should not be completely separated from religion and the church – and whether the school should be exclusively oriented towards the social and political, civil order of French society.

In 1775 this development had its first visible highpoint. Turgot’s government wanted to place the entire education system under a Conseil de l’instruction nationale [national educational council]. This was to be part of the administrative reform of the state. The elementary school level should be open to the entire population. Students would be taught empirical, useful knowledge, or savoir utile. The concern was not about everyone having the same basic rights but instead about uniformité des vues patriotiques, uniform patriotic attitudes that would be disseminated through the teaching given to the young. Meritocratic advancement in the education system to higher ranks was to be possible. Public education would be standard, uniform, in a way that was explicitly contrasted against the previous
standardization in French education that had served exclusive privilege (Turgot, 1775/1922, pp. 578-579).

The liberal natural rights and human rights were thus expanded to include a social integration model. Church and religion were not only explicitly circumvented but also competed against openly. This third position opened up an entirely new debate. The issue was now no longer which church but rather state versus church – public/state schools versus schools oriented towards church policy and religion. This newly formed front shaped a mentality that still today is known as laïcité, or secularism, meaning freedom of public institutions, especially primary schools, from the influence of the Catholic Church and its doctrine.

The great debates in the Revolution on education in France were influenced and shaped by the conflicts around 1760. With the end of the monarchy and the Revolution, everything changed. Condorcet wanted to go in the direction of a liberal republic, with more freedom for education. But also, and directly opposed to that, state control of education was to be strengthened in the direction of a state monopoly in public education. But none of the actors had direct access to the elementary school level. In 1808 the public administration under Napoleon put the elementary schools once again in the hands of the church (Lelièvre, 1990).

Nevertheless, the new “state versus church” front was still significant. In these conflicts important networks formed, building stable ties between scientists and education policy makers. In French historiography the most important of these networks is called generally les libéraux. After the failures of the Republic, these liberal circles could not endorse the program of Condorcet’s renewed republicanism. They found their consensus in the framework of liberal basic rights and social and scientific progress.

This liberal network became firmly anchored institutionally already in 1795 in the reorganization of the higher education system in France. The Institut National, later the Institut de France, and the academies remained under the strong influence of the liberal entourage during both the Empire and the Restoration (Leterrier, 1995) Napoleon’s Université Impériale, which took charge of the entire higher education system up to the time of the Second Republic and the Falloux Laws of 1850, was also permanently under the influence of this liberal network.

This continuity is stable. Leterrier (1995) wrote that in these institutions even the Restoration was mainly “symbolic” (p. 16). In the nineteenth century the continuity was apparent also to contemporaries: In 1832 Guizot, minister of the interior, appointed all still surviving veterans of the network from around 1795 members of the newly established Académie des sciences morales et politiques. The majority of these persons, among them Siéyès and Tracy, could not attend the ceremonial opening session due to complaints of old age (p. 73).

The liberal network was anchored within the higher school institutions. The network chose a strategy of phases, or stages. The reform of the higher education system was to create the needed personnel. Then, in a second step, these personnel would develop the lower school system. The standardization followed the original plan closely, as stated by Tracy in his strategy paper as a member of the Conseil
d’instruction publique. Education policy under Napoleon sought rapprochement with the church, to which Tracy was opposed.

The liberal network worked continuously on the lower school level. Surveys of the elementary schools were conducted, and school materials were produced. The education system became the subject of systematic scientific research, science morale et politique – the guiding discipline of the liberals (Osterwalder, 2010).

In the transitional period to the Restoration, uncertainty prevailed. The network joined together with the government. There were also attempts at direct interventions in the institutions at the lower school level. Already in 1815 the Société pour l’instruction primaire was founded. This Société opened secular primary schools following the old plan.

Three prominent members of this society, all of them with firm roots in higher education, drew up a new plan for reform of the primary schools for the new government. The king issued the plan as an Ordonnance on February 29, 1816. The communes/municipalities had to guarantee that all children were admitted to free-of-charge primary school instruction. There was also a state system of control of the implementation of this “compulsory school attendance” in the communes. Each administrative unit had a comité de surveillance. In addition to the priest and judge, the head of the upper level schools was an ex officio member of the committee. The direct supervisors were mostly priests. The central government awarded teachers’ permission to teach. It chose the school books and provided funds for model schools and books. In addition, good teachers were given a special bonus (Nique, 1990).

The founding of schools and school funding by the Société moved the competition between secular and clerical schools from higher education to the villages themselves. This is what finally brought the fight for the secular school, the fight for realization of the school reform of the eighteenth century, to the lower school level. From 1816 on, the number of schools and provision of schooling developed slowly but continuously. Despite the political developments in France, the secular school expanded steadily in the following decades.

“Citizen King” Louis Philippe himself and a large part of his ministers, among them the minister of the interior, Guizot, were active members of the Société pour l’instruction élémentaire prior to the July Revolution in 1830. They made development of the primary schools a central task of the government. With Guizot’s 1833 policy, the new government introduced four new accents:

1. For one, the Départements as administrative units were obliged to set up state Ecoles Normales, training centres for (male) teachers (Nique, 1990). License to teach now generally required a state teacher certification.
2. For another, starting in 1834 there were regular school/teacher publications, a Manuel général, and a number of state-approved textbooks.
3. Third, a massive state apparatus for school inspections was set up. The agency not only recorded school statistics but also monitored the further establishment and development of the schools. The secular higher schools were now stabilized and produced the needed personnel.
Finally, generous state funds were provided for the establishment and development of new primary schools. The high level of state administration did leave its mark on the new primary school of the liberals. The administrative dimension aimed for stability of the social order, the “gouvernement des esprits” (Guizot, 1816, p. 9). Church schools still existed, and the transition to the higher school levels remained closed. Nevertheless, it can be said that the development of the schools in the July Monarchy was a continuation of the projects of 1775 and 1791/1792, which corresponds also with the public perception and discussion in the short period of the Second Republic from 1848-1851. The young republican Jules Ferry announced in a speech in 1871 that the future republic – the third, in the French manner of counting – would at last be capable of completing the republican education plan of Condorcet, meaning implementing it totally (for details, see Osterwalder, 1998). It should be noted that Ferry held this speech before the fall of the Second French Empire of Louis Napoléon. During the time of the Empire, the church once again had access to the primary schools and mainly to a part of the higher level schools.

The Third Republic starting in 1871, and Ferry, who was minister of education in 1879 and prime minister in 1880, did not rely only on educational institutions with capable personnel. The programs of Turgot and Condorcet and others were accepted by the elite in the liberal republic. Cultural expectations of the schools developed. The development of the French education system was the last missing element in the great showdown between the secular state and the Catholic Church (on the continuity of French liberal republicanism regarding the school program and cultural expectations of the school, see Osterwalder, 2011).

EDUCATION REFORMS IN SWITZERLAND IN THE LONGUE DURÉE OF THE EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE OEEC/OECD

The expansion of education (Bildungsexpansion) in Switzerland in the last third of the twentieth century occurred seemingly without any single program and without any steering and control. Through the longue durée, however, I will show that that is not the case.

In Switzerland, federalism in general and the diverse organization and control of the educational institutions in education policy in particular have been inviolable since the nineteenth century. Seen historically, the phase of the expansion of education is a break with tradition. It is said that the part-projects are not coordinated and not steered or controlled. In actual fact, however, all of the projects have, in addition, political objectives of the central steering of the education system by the federal government.

The opening up of the universities in the late 1960s was accompanied by efforts to pass federal legislation. And in fact, in 1968 the Bundesgesetz über die Hochschulförderung [Federal Law on University Funding] went into effect. The law not only assigns the central government the task of providing part-funding of the cantonal universities and their expansion but also allows it to work towards the
cooperation of all universities in the country in teaching and research (Bundesgesetz über die Hochschulförderung vom 28. Juni 1968). Also, the changes in Switzerland in accordance with the Bologna Process immediately gave a boost to this program objective. Efforts are still underway at present to strengthen central steering and control.

Not very successful at first was the attempt to anchor central steering and control of the education system in the Swiss federal constitution. In 1973, in the beginning phase of the expansion reforms, the referendum attempt failed in a popular vote. In 2006, however, it was voted in, probably due to the influence of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (on the reorganization of education policy in Switzerland in the \textit{longue durée}, see Osterwalder & Weber, 2004).

As to the origin of this one programme objective (central steering and control by the state), we have to look far – both in time and geographically. For the search takes us not only outside of the narrowly defined time period of educational expansion to a long lead time but also beyond the borders of Switzerland to international education policy. It is there that we find a central and supranational programme of expansion of education and initial attempts at steering such a programme in Switzerland.

The Organization for European Economic Coordination (OEEC) was created in 1948. This international European organization was founded in Europe under American leadership to coordinate the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. With the termination of the Marshall Plan in 1952 and the shift in international politics in the wake of the Korean War to military confrontation, the OEEC had fewer and fewer direct tasks. In the longer term it had to see to new international coordination tasks. And since 1954, one topic has been central in the OEEC: the importance of well-educated (in science and technology) managers for the economic upturn or development.

In economics and science, the United States had a lead over Western Europe. The successful opening up of the high school and the simultaneous switch to practical, technological knowledge in the first half of the twentieth century was seen as responsible for this lead. In 1955 OEEC published a report stating that in Western Europe generally but also in Switzerland there was a shortage of manpower educated in science and technology. A further report in 1957 looked only at the education systems in European countries. The report stated that the shortage in well-educated workers could be blamed for Europe’s standstill in science and technology. The report stated that higher education in Western Europe was too socially selective and that the main thrust of the curricula was one-sidedly literary and historical. Technology and the natural sciences were not promoted. Further, the report found that the education system lacked central management. The report on deficits led to a programme in Western Europe. A comparative OEEC study on higher education in Holland, Germany, and Switzerland in 1959 confirmed the deficit (for details in the context of science policy in Switzerland, see Gees, 2006).
For implementation of this international programme in Switzerland’s education policy there were two fundamental problems:

– The Swiss delegates to the OEEC and their networks in Switzerland all came from the field of economic policy. In 1958, a position was created in the Swiss federal government and charged with developing an appropriate implementation strategy. It was called in minimalistic fashion the *Konsultative Kommission*. The position was created in the *Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit* (BIGA) [Koller, 2008] [Federal Office for Industry and Labour]. It had no access to institutions that were decisive in education policy.

– Even more difficult in this situation was Switzerland’s federalism. The crucial authorities in education policy were not even in the federal government. They are split up in a federalist manner and operate their own coordination instrument, which is completely separate from the central government.

In this first phase, after the OEEC programme was taken over in the agencies responsible for economic policy, the aim was to start there and then integrate it in education-policy oriented networks and crucial institutions. This would be done three steps:

– First, the actors involved in economic policy founded associations under private law. The associations made the political objectives known via the narrow economic policy circles (Hummler, 1959).

– In addition, in 1956 the Federal Council set up an *Arbeitsausschuss zur Förderung des wissenschaftlichen und technischen Nachwuchses* [task force on promoting young professionals in science and technology] with almost 200 members from important economic and education policy committees and bodies (for a list, see Hummler, 1959, pp. 53-54). A final report was made public in 1959. The report repeated the programme of the OEEC for Switzerland but this time with the signatures of almost all of the country’s prominent education policy makers and representatives of the leading educational institutions. Regarding the universities, here the concept of central steering became popular in Switzerland for the first time (Hummler, 1959).

The programme was aimed exclusively at promoting the natural and engineering sciences. A large part of the higher education system put up bitter resistance. The head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs set up a *Kommission für Nachwuchsfragen auf dem Gebiete der Geisteswissenschaften und der medizinischen Berufe sowie des Lehrberufes auf der Mittelschulstufe* [commission on promoting young professionals in the humanities and the arts, in medical professions, and in the high-school teaching profession]. This commission conscientiously expanded the OEEC diagnosis to include all academic disciplines, including theology (Schultz, 1963). It proposed measures for opening up the *Gymnasium* and the university. This defused the problem of the one-sided promotion of education in technology and the natural sciences.

– In 1962, before the commission’s work was completed, a third commission was established. This commission developed the federal law for the cantons’ and universities’ implementation of these measures decreed by the federal government (Labhardt, 1964).
In the perspective of the *longue durée*, we can say that also this reform required a very long, almost 30-year programme and decision-making phase before it could be implemented. The problem here was very similar to that in the liberal school reform efforts in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The actors in this programme first had to create the contexts and networks. They had to build institutions that secured social and cultural acceptance and the institutional execution of their decisions. In this way it was possible for reform to reach the educational institutions.

If we see the centralization of the education system and the opening of a new technology-oriented higher education system as the capstone of this internationally planned education reform in Switzerland, we find that it took more than 60 years from planning to coming into force. Sixty years is a great deal longer than the narrow time period of the *Bildungsexpansion*.

What insights are gained through the perspective of the *longue durée*? What can we learn when we open up the separate, enclosed time periods under investigation? Taking our two examples of the French Revolution and the expansion of education in Switzerland, we find that the great event of the Revolution – at least in terms of the education programme – and its prominent actors do not simply disappear. They clearly become a part of a large, overarching, long development over time of cultural confrontation and institutional change. The actors in the expansion of education in Switzerland also do not simply disappear in the perspective of the *longue durée*. Instead, they appear as a part of a programmatic, internationally planned concept of education reform. This concept aimed at long-term successful standardization of the European educational institutions overall, the Swiss schools at the upper secondary level, and in particular the control authorities – and to fit them into the development of the international markets.

But the importance of this change in perspective for the historiography of education is even broader. In this long perspective, education and reform programmes are no longer depicted as unique pedagogical actions but rather as the result of changes in cultural attitudes and mentalities and of the effect of different contexts of education and educational institutions. In the historical process, these attitudes and mentalities become more and more compressed in “languages” (Pocock, 1987). In these languages education and school are tailored to fit the culture. The different normative options are integrated into a whole system, establishing the norms that one endorses and also the norms to which one is opposed.

Education policy decisions thus no longer take on the character of great events. They are more a series of decisions over a long time period. They become informal and formal processes, processes that long before the current-day internationalization perspectives crossed over the national borders of state education policy. These decision processes take place at different levels and in
different institutional and social environments. They eventually catch on or do not catch on in the educational institutions. They bring changes that may be quite different from the original intention.

It is not so that an institutional change just “happens”. Nor can it be implemented precisely according to the plan of a reform programme. Instead, we see long processes of institutional change and institution building. These processes take decades and are processes of change of social networks, in which the school and its direct actors, students and teachers, are incorporated.

The expectations of the environment change over time. The education institutions respond to those expectations by taking up and accepting programmes. This is the way that the school and instruction change.

Regarding education programmes and reforms, the perspective of the *longue durée* does not reveal only long-term change. It shows also failed programmes and reforms that the education institutions rejected. In brief: It shows the great stability and continuity of education institutions.

And the perspective of the *longue durée* also shows something else: Through this new research perspective, we can take an informed look at today’s education policy according to the traditional and frowned-upon model of *Historia vitae magistra*. Up to now, it has been said in historiography that it is not possible to learn political lessons for present and future from the past (for example, Koselleck, 1979, pp. 38-66), for in modern times change is too rapid. However, with regard to the perspective of change of education institutions and reform in the *longue durée*, we find the opposite. Educational institutions change only in extremely slow rhythms; they require in-depth change in personnel, the sociocultural environment, and finally also the management structures. Present-day education policy should actually take the necessary action as a result of this: Instead of short-term reform projects, which are mostly not effective, reform programmes should be longer term and therefore more lasting and more effective. The reforms of today mostly aim at fast results and are then forgotten before even one expected effect occurs, and they are soon replaced by a new reform.

REFERENCES


EDUCATION PROGRAMMES, EDUCATION REFORMS, AND THE LONGUE DURÉE


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A huge theme such as ‘the future of education research’ is a bit frightening. However (I reflected), I was being asked to talk about my own field of study, so answers to the editorial question – ‘how should we outline and conduct research on educational systems in the future?’ – could be quite linear. Many specialists in comparative education are confident that we understand our past, as a field of study, and are confident that the past was good. And certainly it is easy to find optimism about our current potentials and options (Crossley & Watson, 2011).

Presumably, then, comparative education research simply needs to continue the old trajectory? Thus – for example – we study education systems and we should continue to think in terms of educational ‘boxes’ and layers: how might elementary education be improved or secondary education, or vocational-technical education be reformed for the better (and so on)? We should, if we are to be wise and relevant, retain our assumption that comparative education is about the improvement of education policy – thus the hot topics of education policy should be the intellectual agenda of comparative education? We could work closely with governments, as advisers, consultants, contract-researchers. We could continue to assume that all international and regional agencies have humane or human-centred agendas, and thus working with them and for them is always non-problematic.

In other words, we could continue within a tradition that has taken two hundred years to form: There is an agenda of academic attention which is more or less co-terminus with policy issues and current ‘hot topics’; we can retain our traditional political assumptions about benign and benevolent notions of ‘the public good’ as these are expressed by democratic governments – or indeed by most governments that are not dominated by, say, the Taliban; and we can insist that gradually we are coming closer and closer to being a comparative social science.

I think not. The world has changed and we are underestimating its complexity. We have not thought whether there are any distinctions to be made between university-based academic scholarship and work of ‘applying a science’ – we have too rarely reflected on the differences between ourselves as academics and the agendas of Ministries of Education or international agencies. Because we have become too uncritical of our traditional view of the role and purpose of
comparative education, we are, I think, too confident that we know our responsibilities now (Cowen, 2006).

My theme, then, becomes how to escape this trap of our collective memory in order to think freshly (about comparative research agendas and education systems) for the future.

To do that, I will try to offer the analysis in three parts. I will try, first, to identify the continuities which mark the agendas of academic attention within comparative education in the recent past and which have constructed our excess of confidence; second, to discuss why such confidence should currently be a source for anxiety rather than self-congratulation; and thirdly, I make some suggestions about two main ways to escape the limits we have placed on our own scholarly imaginations, within comparative education.

CONTINUITIES AND CERTAINTIES

‘Comparative education’ has a starting date - 1817. That gives a sense of certainty and continuity.

However, that is a little odd. Why was not the starting point of ‘comparative education’ some major political (or religious) struggle? Obvious candidates for such a starting point include the problem of creating education ‘systems’ in the new colonies of Britain (including New England with its Puritan influences) or the old colonies of Portugal and Brazil (with their Jesuit influences); or 1789 and the French Revolution and Condorcet; or the 1848 revolutions in Europe. The impact of religion or politics or social stratification, amid the international movement of educational ideas, on what is taken to be good knowledge and on the systematized provision of education (or on its deliberate absence) has been visible for centuries.

Instead, we conventionally link the founding of ‘modern’ comparative education (in 1817) to the writing of Jullien de Paris (Fraser, 1964), whose definition of social contexts is vague but who is relatively precise in his suggestions about how to describe education: He picks themes which are appropriate for the description of mass, basic, public education systems. His research technique will be the questionnaire. He has a very clear definition of usefulness: Comparative education, as a positive science, will show the correct way to improve educational policy decisions. Such decisions will be based on selecting ‘best practice’ from overseas examples. Of course, there is a political principle at the centre of his thinking – a version of intellectual and social ‘modernity’ and an emphasis on reform based on fact, on induction; but what is also interesting is the narrow agenda of what should be described in contrast to the breadth of the claim which he enters – that a ‘science’ of comparative education is possible. This pattern can be taken as the starting point of what I refer to as ‘modernist’ comparative education (Cowen, 2009). A comparative education which assumes that its point and purpose is to be scientific, to describe and classify education systems, to locate and compare similarities in and differences in education policies and to assist governments in taking decisions about education - to come up with ‘solutions’.
The strategic shift to worrying about the social and political contexts, in which education systems are located, becomes visible later. In 1900 Sir Michael Sadler in his lecture “How far may we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education?” emphasizes the ‘impalpable forces’ and ‘the spirit of battles long ago’ which shape education (Sadler, 1964). This motif gradually produced a discourse about ‘forces and factors’ and social context – notably through the work of Nicholas Hans (1950). From Hans’ work come a number of normal puzzles for comparative education: the importance of the ‘forces and factors’ of language, religions, race, and political philosophies for educational systems. Hans’ work, and that of others such as Friedrich Schneider (Hartman, 2009) and Isaac Kandel (1933) ensured that we inherited the puzzle of ‘context’ – which forces outside of school systems permit us to understand why education systems are as they are?

The ‘social forces’ which were emphasized in this early discourse stressed the importance of differences in ideas. Despite the fact that Hans was alert to ‘geographic and economic circumstances’, the analyses were culturalist rather than materialist. Hans’ motif was the cohesion of societies and nations and the ways in which particular combinations of his ‘factors’ assisted or blocked this and shaped education systems. Later re-formulations of the theme of culture came through writings on philosophical models of man (Lauwerys, 1965); national character (Mallinson, 1957); and the concepts of ‘cultural envelopes’, ‘newness’, and uncertainty (King, 1968; King, 1979). Later still, the theme appears in the writing of contemporary scholars (Cowen, 1994; Crossley, 2000; Crossley, 2008; Crossley, 2009; McLean, 1996; Welch, 1993).

Thus comparative education, in its initial formation, emphasizes its contribution to the formulation of public policy and the improvement of education systems. This epistemic position is also a political position: In most of the histories of comparative education offered to students, major education reformers of the nineteenth century (such as Horace Mann and Torrey Harris in the United States, Kay Shuttleworth in England, Ryerson in Canada, and Victor Cousin in France) are labelled as ‘comparative educationists’, no doubt on the same principle that begins with Jullien in 1817: a stress on comparative education as a ‘positive science’. A role is also accorded to institutions concerned with the improvement of education policy – for example, the Bureau of Education in the nineteenth century aimed at identifying best practice among the states in the United States and the International Bureau of Education in Geneva, not least under the leadership of Pedro Rosello in the 1920s, aimed to identify ‘best practice’ internationally. His idea was that ‘trends’ in education policy – identified on a worldwide basis – would contribute to a policy-useful science of education. This has produced a surprisingly large literature, later assisted by improvements in techniques for the collection and presentation of education statistics. Concern about the theme goes back to Jullien and takes contemporary form in the reports from some of the international and regional agencies (Cowen, 1982; World Bank, 1995; World Bank, 1996).

The political motifs of the improvement of practical policy, and of the aspiration to be a useful ‘science’ continue within more contemporary versions of
comparative education. Indeed in some places the very name ‘comparative education’ changes, notably in the naming of the American professional society of comparative educationists as a Society of International and Comparative Education (CIES); and in the separation of the British professional society from the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). The British professional network became a freestanding British Comparative and International Education Society (BCIES).

These moves symbolized an important new set of epistemic and political alliances: The agenda of ‘comparative education’ would now be extended to cover the ‘development’ of non-industrial societies. From now on ‘comparative education’ would be loosely linked with the work of Western governments including the American and British governments in reforming what began to be called the ‘Third World’. It would use theories of sociological and economic development that emphasized the basic similarities of industrial societies and the power of non-Marxist theories – a signifier of the superiority of Adam Smith over Karl Marx – for the development of the Third World.

In other words, ‘international and comparative education’ was now positioned in a different way, politically and epistemically, compared with the inter-war period. It had become part of the Cold War. ‘International and comparative’ education would now explore the nature of convergence in the so-called developed world and the problems of developing the so-called developing world. Examples of the emergent paradigmatic statements were in the text Education, Economy and Society (Halsey, Floud, & Anderson, 1965) – with its convergence hypothesis – and in the work of Anderson and Bowman (1966).

Overall, the emphasis had shifted from ‘culture’ and historical ‘forces and factors’ to the comparative analysis of the technological imperative, with its correlates of social, economic, and cultural convergence and economic modernity. The economic world had suddenly been given visibility in comparative and international education. The strategic research question became what are the technological, scientific, and human-capital potentials for modernization, the selective functions of education systems, and their relation to the world of work. The practical motif (of advice on governmental and agency policy in education) was back in a most forceful and well-financed form.

A motif in the older discourse – the motif of ‘science’ going back to Jullien de Paris – also reappeared in the form of advocacy of precise, preferably quantitative, analysis of the kind which was visible in the modes of thought in economics and the ‘harder’ social sciences of the time (the 1960s), such as positivist sociology and psychology. This strand was taken forward by the work of Noah and Eckstein (1969; Eckstein & Noah, 1969) and by an important suggestion from C. Arnold Anderson (among others): We would not have a good comparative education until the results of educational systems were known.

From this 1960s intellectual positioning of the field of study, there developed major bodies of literature on the relations of education and economies, education and ‘modern’ values (McClelland, 1961; Inkeles & Smith, 1975), and education and attainment, measured internationally. The continuing stream of IEA studies
was an example of this discourse in comparative education and the development of ‘big social science’ (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996). Such work, including its contemporary extensions like PISA and the effective schools movement (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997) is aimed at the production of policy-useful knowledge. Over time, this has built up into a technicist, pragmatic discourse about the improvement of educational institutions and processes, in terms of their economic and educational efficiency. ‘Measurable results’ have emerged as a definition – both technical and ideological – of ‘quality’.

There were two other motifs which have consolidated the tradition. One theme was ‘the methods canon’ – an explosion of the literature in the 1960s to establish ‘a comparative method’ for comparative education (Jones, 1971). The other motif looked quite muddled, but the strategic issue was the question of what was ‘the problématique’ of comparative education.

Much of that agenda came from an amalgam of ‘national puzzles’. In other words, what can be ‘seen’ as problematic was seen from Germany, or from France, or from England (and so on). Comparative education was built up through specific geo-political national puzzles – the German concern for Eastern Europe; the Japanese interest in morality and moral education; the English fixation with secondary school structures domestically and Africa internationally; the American analyses of the USSR; and the French concern for le tiers monde and Francophone Africa (Halls, 1990). These concerns were mixed with ‘hot topics’ (Noah, 1974). These are captured in the wide range of articles in the professional journals and in the sudden lurches in their agendas of attention. The discursive vocabulary was that of ‘relevance’. The excuses for the comparisons were public salience in one country.

CERTAINTIES AND ANXIETIES

The confident certainties were, then, quite considerable:

- Comparative education has its own form: it juxtaposes and thus ‘compares’; furthermore, it improved – initially it compared education systems but later it compared education systems framed in their ‘contexts’; and over a long period of time comparative education gradually developed its own methods literature – with the aspiration of becoming a science.
- Comparative education had its own agenda of attention – notably trajectories of national puzzles and a changing series of hot topics; it was about policies in education which could be compared and ‘best practice’ could be identified; and so comparative education was a highly relevant and useful subject.
- And comparative education was properly (if rather quietly) located politically: it served the democratic liberal state, and by extension it was actually quite useful in the Cold War period, partly by illuminating Soviet best practice and also by developing the Third World in a non-Marxist way and working out ways for the non-socialist high per capita income countries to converge technologically and economically, partly through intelligent education reform.
It is these forms of confidence which – in themselves – construct anxieties about the implications of such linearities framing the future research agenda of comparative education.

Clearly, any hot topic or educative process may be construed ‘comparatively’: That is, it is these days easily possible to assemble and juxtapose educational descriptions from multiple international sites. Epistemically, this problem is quite corrosive. The nominal surface structure of ‘a comparative education text’ are inclusionary: Any hot topic (such as the teaching of English as a foreign language, or safety in schools, or the distribution of information technology in schools, or anti-crime or anti-violence education) may be inserted onto a work agenda of comparative education, if the only criterion of inclusion is the correct surface form (that of juxtaposition) along with a modest technical competence in delivering multiple international-site descriptions. The emphasis on surface form – that is, the juxtaposition of education descriptions and specifications of similarities and differences – produces a pointless triviality of its own: Every now and then there are surveys of the specialist journals which show that only a small number of articles in them are ‘comparative’. Unfortunately, this definition of ‘comparative education’ by its form of presentation would exclude much of Max Weber’s (1948) most brilliant thinking (e.g. his essay on the Chinese Literati and the relations between economies, and knowledge forms, socio-economic stratification systems and political control) but would label a routine narrative account of two kindergartens in Copenhagen and Kandahar as ‘comparative education’.

The ‘methods canon’ has similarly reached the end of its useful life. Despite the obvious academic abilities of those who wrote the texts of the 1960s which celebrated the bursting forth of a new ‘science of comparative education’ as if the work were a final culmination of the aspirations of Jullien, the methods canon, with its interminable rehearsals of principles and tactics of approach to topics, produced irritation in younger scholars rather than one coherent and cumulative discourse. Fortunately, it was interrupted by three things: a sudden concern with colonialism and imperialism; a sudden concern with identity and identity politics (including ethnicities and race and forms of feminism); and a fresh reading of the global which emphasized the post-modern, the post-structuralist, the post-colonial, and the post-socialist. What has survived from that 1960s and mid-1970s period and its concerns with agendas of approach is two motifs. First, the work of the comparative historians has been coherently cumulative, in that it has given us a corpus of comparative interpretation of the relatively stable world of the historical and social origins of education systems (Archer, 1979; Green, 1990; Muller, Ringer, & Simon, 1993; Ringer, 1979). This work continues in the thinking of contemporary scholars who combine historical research and sociological sensibilities – such as Theda Skocpol and Sheldon Rothblatt and, for that matter, Maria Manzon on comparative education itself. Secondly, the work on methods has mutated into a technically brilliant set of multiple-site research of the kind offered by TIMMS and PISA. This is certainly ‘scientific’ in the sense that the results are of the highest technical quality which we can achieve at the moment. Unfortunately, whereas the ‘results’ permit education reform and policy to be
legitimated in specific national contexts – via ‘PISA panic’ as a mode of political mobilization – the academic work itself contributes very little to our understanding of the relations of the interplay of international and domestic politics in the construction of societies and their histories and their education patterns. In other words, PISA and TIMMS and so on are excellent and large scale research – ‘big social science’ – but they are not ‘comparative’ except in the obvious common-or-garden sense of a set of juxtaposed measurements – juxtaposed sets of ‘results’. They point to comparative puzzles rather than provide forms of comparative understanding.

To take a simple example: There is nothing comparative about a proposition drawn from fieldwork results that ‘teachers are happy in Boulogne but not in Bologna’. This is merely social research in two sites (here, separated by an international boundary). A comparative understanding would begin in wondering about the social framing of teachers, their construction as a profession, their relationships to national and local communities, and so on. However, a ‘comparative’ problematique also would locate some notion or practice of ‘transfer’ – the transnational movement of political ideologies or cultural visions into education visions or institutions – which is then grasped in terms of the international political and economic relations that have shaped, domestically, what is being analysed (here, teachers and their social and existential condition). It is in some notion of ‘international transfer’ and domestic politics that the search for ‘comparative’ understanding is finally shaped.

Yes, a range of international testing results tell us (more precisely, tell politicians) how education systems are performing. Some of the professional skill which goes into that international testing is impressive – but a second crucial question is what are the international and domestic politics and the attractiveness and the transfer of the testing technologies which construct PISA itself. (The social construction of PISA itself becomes the comparative problem.) Third, there is the question of whether such tests tell us (more precisely, the politicians) what to do. Clearly, the tests do not and cannot: The Finns are not totally clear on how historically and culturally they got their PISA results anyway, which adds to the complexity involved in any potential ‘German borrowing’ of a ‘Finnish model’. Borrowing that which cannot be discerned is as complicated – and perhaps as pointless – as trying to identify Sadler’s ‘intangible’ forces.

It is also probably the case that the search, dating back to Sadler, for understanding ‘contexts’ has also reached the end of its useful intellectual life, in the ways in which the theme is currently being tackled in comparative education. The search for an understanding of context can rapidly become an interminable regress of histories and languages to be learned, tea (and beer drinking) ceremonies to be mastered, and a series of post-doctoral fellowships which add just-one-more ‘context’ to a list of competencies which have been mastered. Our problem with ‘contexts’ is that, for many years, they have not been seriously theorized. Certainly there was the Nicholas Hans’ treatment of context, through ‘the factors’: language, race, geographic and economic circumstances, religions, and political philosophies. More contemoraneously, comparative education went through its ‘anthropological
moment’. That is, anthropology became one of the many and one of the most promising ‘saviour candidates’ (along with post modernism, Foucault, ‘globalization theory,’ etc.) which would rescue comparative education from its puzzlements.

Of course ‘context’ is a nuisance. Were it not for ‘context’, the policies of the World Bank or OECD would work – the solutions to many problems are well known to economists. However, trying to master ‘context’ as a set of puzzles which mess up a simple ‘geometry of insertion’ (that would permit policies to work as well in reality as they do in intention) is a problem over the inadequacies of the international policy tool kit – it is not an intellectual problem in comparative education currently. The problem of context, like so much else in comparative education, is in need of re-theorization.

Finally, the older politics of comparative education were pleasant, even comforting. With the exception of the neo-Marxist school, most of the discourses were and are melioristic and incrementalist (things can and should be made better, gradually) and evolutionist: Social change is time-linear, sequenced, controllable, and even borrowable. The politics of reform were highly visible. Again with the exception of those who were grumbling about colonialism and cultural imperialism and the hierarchies of world systems, the categories used in the description of education are those of policy-significant sectors of education: finance and administration, curriculum, teacher education, primary or secondary education, vocational-technical education, higher education, or adult education. Thus the politics of ‘comparative education’ – given our historical weakness for ‘hot topics’ – were framed by largely liberal assumptions about acting upon the educational world, and by largely unexamined assumptions that the correct categories of educational description are those made familiar to us by everyday experience of the existence of mass systems of education and their layers – their sectoral organization (primary, secondary, teacher education and so on).

However, the warm words of ameliorist political positioning around education ‘reform’ and ‘education policy’ glide by the obvious point that the world in which we work professionally has seen one widespread political concern – to increase social opportunity and to increase equality of educational opportunity – replaced by another central political concern: to increase economic growth, and the efficiency and effectiveness of education systems in the service of economic growth. Old commitments to ‘education reform’ and ‘education policy advice’ glide by the fact that education reform and policy discourses are much less local, less contextualized, and much more weakly linked into long and complex histories of creative (and sometimes oppositional) social movements. The new ‘reform’ discourses are international or powerfully regional. The discourses are often agency-linked for example, to OECD or the World Bank. And the discourses are marked by signs of the abrupt genesis of coherent crisp policy thought in policy think-tanks – one consequence of which is, as indicated above, the handing over of the difficult problem of fitting new regional policies into local contexts to the locals (whether these locals are the Spanish or the Germans; or Argentines, and Mexicans).
I wrote, a little while ago, that:

The vocabularies of politics and comparative education rapidly overlap: globalisation, internationalisation, regionalisation, Europeanisation, harmonisation, lifelong learning, social capital, skill formation, international development. Politically, these are already salient policy topics. Discursively (in the comparative education journals, in comparative education books, in advanced taught courses in our field of study) such themes are being presented as disciplinary topics, as if they were not merely ‘hot topics’ but also our paradigmatic intellectual supercomplexities. (Cowen, 2006, p. 562)

I went on to argue that there had been “…a semi-official corrosion of intellectual imagination and independence [which] redefines the politics and sociology of knowledge in liberal societies” (Cowen, 2006, p. 562). I concluded that implicitly we (in comparative education at least) are being offered a Faustian contract. We could do well in the world if we accepted the world (and among other things did ‘robust and relevant research’).

Perhaps therefore it is important that we reflect on the nature of our intellectual alternatives for refreshing the nature of academic comparative education. As a minimum some of the traditional research assumptions of comparative education need re-examination.

It is a different domestic and international politics, in which we now ‘read the global’. In parallel, if some of the basic traditional epistemic assumptions of university comparative education (that were discussed earlier) are changed now, the agenda for scholarship and for thought and for ‘research’ changes dramatically.

EDGING ONWARDS:

LANDSCAPES, SCENARIOS AND TOPOGRAPHIES AND UNIT IDEAS

Assume that comparative education is not merely research done in multiple sites which are separated by national boundaries. Assume that it is not about hot topics and that it does not take as its topics the administrative categories of education systems (teacher education, secondary education, etc.). Assume that it does not have as its main concern an agenda of public policy amelioration (of education systems) in cooperation with governments. Assume that comparative education is not an applied science; nor should it – at least at the moment – aspire to be one. Assume that comparative education should understand societies rather than “problem-solve” them. Assume that academic comparative education (this is, those forms of it based in universities) should become theory-informed work, should be paradigmatically framed by that theory work, and assume that comparative education ought to become coherent through time, around intellectual and strategic agendas of attention that offer the possibility to pursue a series of important questions. Assume that such questions should explore the international mobilities of peoples and educational ideas and educational structures; should ask about the interrelations of international and domestic policies as they shape educated identities and education systems; should ask about the intersection of social
structures and individual biographies; should explore individual and societal assumptions about imagined pasts and futures; and lock on to issues of (international and domestic political and economic and cultural) power and imperium as these shape the experience of becoming educated (or perhaps ‘skilled’).

Assume in other words, that we must return to a serious independent intellectual agenda, a serious reading of the world in which we live (in my own vocabulary ‘a reading of the global’), of the kind that Durkheim, Marx, and Weber attempted for their century.

Obviously, the problems of sketching such an approach are enormous, and it is immediately necessary to note that they cannot be sorted out without a great deal of collective effort. Nevertheless, there are starting points – one of which is C. Wright Mills’ thematic about making sense of historical forces and social structures and individual biographies; and a second is the concern of Robert Nisbet to identify what he called ‘unit ideas’ – the themes which, he argued, have been the topics around which the intellectual field of sociology traditionally clustered.

Thus it is important to take some leaps of imagination and sketch and then enter new landscapes, topographies, and scenarios – and probably embarrass ourselves. At least such wild vocabulary carries the shock of the unfamiliar. However, as with the ‘postmodern turn’ or the ‘linguistic turn’, a geographic metaphor hints at changes outside of the field of study which we call comparative education.

For example, currently and strategically, a new emphasis on spatialities is not merely a banal response to ‘globalization’; it is also a necessary theoretical one. Similarly, the concept of ‘internationalization’ is now a routine policy act for Australian, Belgian, Dutch, English, and North American universities, but how may it be understood – that is, theorized? We need fresh vocabularies for the theorization of internationalization – vocabularies which have already taken us rapidly into concepts of nodes and hubs and networks, as both institutional and discursive formations. We need new phrases such as topographies (or perhaps most famously, the ‘space of flows’) which highlight fresh challenges to re-think our concept of space: crucially, here, the altered flows of international educational relations as part of changing international political and economic relations.

We also need to get rid of some of the older words. For example, perhaps we gloss over the scale of educational change in our times when we use the word ‘reform’. Certainly the long haul from the early nineteenth century – to establish schooling systems, to elongate schooling systems, and to include more and more people in them up to ‘tertiary’ level – is not over. The briefest acquaintance with the massive difficulties of providing education for females in some countries, of constructing education in the favellas of Brazil, or of delivering education in societies which are fragmenting, are among the sharp reminders that the traditional ‘reform’ agenda is incomplete.

Nevertheless, for many countries in the world what has happened is a shift in what could be called the topography of education. Between the early nineteenth century and the early twenty-first century, the map of ‘education’ itself changed. Its contents, its institutions, and the people who populate it have been re-
configured: There has been a shift into an emphasis on skill-formation (rather than education); a glorification of ‘management’ (instead of leadership); an abrupt lurch into talk about ‘world class universities’ whose facades are measurable but the secrets of whose academic cultures remain elusive; and a new naming of pupils and parents and students as ‘customers’. Of course, it can be expected that the discursive framing of these processes will gradually weaken and that alternative visions of ‘good education’ will be generated. But it is odd to call these massive historical processes by the term educational ‘reforms’. Perhaps the more historically shocking word ‘Reformation’ has something of the necessary political abruptness which may be required to re-think the contemporary moment. Or – to revert to a geographic turn of phrase – we may need metaphors about tectonic plate shifts and rift valleys (and topographies). Overall, it is less and less clear that we should be studying something as time-truncated as education ‘reform’.

We can take this one step further by invoking the word ‘scenario’. Scenarios are very different from predictions, or specifications of chains of causes and consequences. The great educators sketched scenarios: visions of societies which included clear definitions of human potentials and the styles of education which might release (or block) those potentials. Comenius and Confucius, Dewey and Freire, Adorno and Alfred North Whitehead are among our examples. Maybe, if we ‘advise’ governments, we need to be cautious about some of the scenarios in which we are assigned roles as reliable actor-technicians who can remember their lines. Whose lines are we being assigned and – in contrast – what scenarios are we ourselves writing? Was UNESCO itself the last scenario devised from a complex vision of the cultures of the world and the need to retain rather than homogenize them?

The point is not for us to become rhetoricians, declaimers of visions, talking loose talk about promise and possibility. The point is for us to be cautious in taking up the role of technicians of education reform and to revisit and to revitalise older notions of education statesmanship shaped by the wisdom that is perhaps accessible through comparative scholarship.

We are not short of facts. But how are we doing on landscapes and topographies and scenarios? In other words, as comparative educationists what are our forms of understanding of some of the great sweeps of historical events through which we are living, and of the alternative futures which shimmer before our eyes when we feel optimistic?

Let us begin with the mundane.

First, I suggest that scholarship and research in comparative education becomes considerably more coherent if it is understood that academic comparative education is especially sensitive to international politics and that – as suggested earlier – even its name (as comparative education or as international and comparative education) reflects the interplay of international and domestic politics. Similarly ‘the view from’, say, Japan or East Germany – or West Germany – is heavily dependent on when the view is being taken (1848; 1868; 1918; 1945; 1985) and of course from where the view is being taken. It is ‘the when and the where’ which tend to define the agenda of attention (which topics are studied) the agenda
of approach (how they are studied) and what I recently called the agenda of agglutination – who you study them with; that is, with whom you ally both intellectually and (de facto) politically. Thus the kind of comparative education which the Japanese undertook after 1868, partly in alliance with the Americans, was of a completely different kind to the comparative education themes which they reflected on after 1945.

Second, I suggest that at the core of comparative education is an academic agenda which has variously come into focus and then gone out of focus over the years and that different comparative educationists have worked different aspects of this agenda but that almost all specialist scholars have stayed within it. There has been a coherent but implicit academic agenda if the time span for thinking of such things is at least two decades – with considerable variation in individual interests and different emphases in different universities in different places within those time periods.

I suggest, thirdly, that this academic agenda is made up (to borrow a phrase from Robert Nisbet) of ‘unit ideas’ – but the unit ideas of comparative education. These unit ideas are:

– Transfer: the international movement of education ideas, practices, and institutions. This is the core unit idea, without which it is difficult to conceptualize a comparative education – but the theme of transfer is given life and complexity by several other unit ideas.
These other unit ideas include:

– Concepts of social time, although individual or biographic time should not be ignored. Within the subject itself there have been some remarkably simplistic assumptions made about progress and the linearities of time, for example, as well as ferocious disputes about whether ‘history’ is or is not relevant to comparative education.

– Concepts of space – obviously political and economic, but also cultural space in all its complexities as well as fresh ideas on distinctions between space and place and obviously notions of sub-national and international and transnational and global space. Space is where comparative education plays, as it were – though simplistic notions of national space trivialized the concept of ‘transfer’ itself.

– Manifestly, the education system itself has been a stable ‘unit idea’ in comparative education – but again this has constructed a limitation of the work of comparative education. By construing ‘the education system’ in its nineteenth century mode, comparative education placed itself inside the ‘modernist trap’. There is no intellectual reason why the city states of Greece or the city states of Renaissance Italy or the kingly states of Europe (e.g. the Tudors in England) should not be interpreted as being characterized by ‘education systems’. The comparative questions raised by such a de-blinkered vision are considerable. However, in parallel,

– The State itself needs to be understood as a ‘unit idea’ – whether in the forms mentioned above or as the ‘state-nation’ which was originally the political formation of the United States (in the argument of Phillip Bobbitt) or in its
contemporary forms which include (again in the argument of Phillip Bobbitt) the ‘market state’ – an hitherto unusual condition in which the job of the State is to sustain the market.…

- Obviously, at the heart of any comparative education are concepts of the educated person. The proposition may be obvious, but it is untrue. Work on concepts of the educated person has been clear and highly ideational: Concepts of Dewey, Marx, Locke, and so on are the normal currency for discussion of the concept. By extension and to a very strange extent, comparative education – largely because of its insistence on its own cultural relativism – has been very diffident about asserting a vision of ‘the educated person’ except in terms of identity politics and a range of ‘posts’ – as in post-colonial and so on. Finally,

- In its origins – and currently through contract research and consultancies – a rather strong and precise notion of praxis has characterized comparative education (especially ‘international and comparative’ education). At the time of writing, how rapidly this concept is being renegotiated is unclear – but given the increasingly clear overlap between military activity, and post-conflict stabilities, and the involvement of development agencies and ‘international and comparative educationists’, it is unlikely that this ‘unit idea’ in comparative education will remain as confident, comfortable, and undisputed as it has been for the last few decades.

It is possible to make these unit ideas much more complex. That is not quite the point here. Here the point is to keep them simple. It is argued that most articles in the academic journals currently and most of the major new ‘comparative’ books deal with complex combinations of the unit ideas – and begin in the concept of transfer (which of course it is difficult to separate from space and time – and often the State… etc.).

The unit ideas – in themselves – provide a research agenda as new ‘readings of the global’ are attempted by comparative educationists in the twenty-first century. It is the processes of transfer, translation, and transformation – what I recently called the mobilities and the metamorphoses of educational ideas and practices – which are revitalising the theoretical possibilities and privileges of working in comparative education. The unit ideas are the frames within it is possible to watch the interplay of international and domestic politics (and international educational relations), as these change in the ways in which they compress social power into education forms (whether in Afghanistan or in Thatcher’s England, in Shanghai or in South Korea in the last thirty years – or perhaps fail to change in North Korea). Why then are notions of the hero and the stranger and the barbarian also needed as a leitmotif for future scholarship, thinking, and research in comparative education?

EDGING TOWARDS A CONCLUSION:
THE HERO AND THE BARBARIAN AND THE STRANGER

The startling thing is this: Almost regardless of where you start in comparative education (including with the history of comparative education itself), the three concepts release the imagination. Thus for example, the founding fathers of
comparative education, the heroes, become – on one argument in the published literature – dishonoured ancestors. Similarly, Japan having being interpreted by the Americans in 1945 as ‘barbarian’ becomes – by the time of the search for effective and efficient schools and high grades in international testing – a hero in the 1970s – and again a barbarian or at least a stranger through its failure to redefine its history text books in their coverage of the Second World War. China, in its rejection of Confucianism and its acceptance of Mao’s ideas becomes a hero State to many Western intellectuals in the period of the Cultural Revolution but reverts with its achievement in international tests and the competitive pressure within its contemporary schooling system to the status of an educational barbarian: It is Confucian again.

The point, however, is not to find examples and list them. The point is this: We have always left human beings out of comparative education. We have consoled ourselves with notions of the well-educated young man (from the French lycée, the German Gymnasium or the English grammar schools – and the neatly dressed Octobrist). This is for understandable professional reasons: we insist in our early education of comparative students that as few cultural judgements are made as possible and we emphasise cultural understanding can be attained through a serious relativism. Into this studious relativism came questions about feminisms and race and ethnicity. And currently into this studious relativism come questions about the nature of a contemporary barbarian: is he (or she) someone who is merely well trained in skills? Or is that person a new kind of hero?

In other words, comparative educationists are currently not energetically noticing that there is the attribution and distribution of the statuses of hero, barbarian, and stranger to States within the world-system. In the space we work on – the international political and economic and cultural and educational relations – we are often gliding by the labelling systems and the hierarchies of hero, stranger, and barbarian. North and South, developed and developing, fragile and broken states are not sufficient as an intellectual apparatus to ‘read the global’ contemporaneously.

Similarly, we are not seeing that at the heart of our comparative education there is emptiness. No one is defining education itself. We are merely noting the exotic: the heroes, the strangers and the barbarians, without addressing the ethical and political question which goes back in time for several thousand years in most cultures: What is a barbarian, and what are the forms of his or her education, and how do you engage with barbarians; on what terms do we greet strangers; and whom will we count as our educated heroes and why?

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