



Comparative, International, and Transnational Histories of Education

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Robert Cowen

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Abstract

The introduction to the analysis notes briefly some current changes in political context and suggests that this is as good a moment as any to ask new questions about “the comparative history of education.” The first section of the chapter considers some of the overlaps and differences between the “comparative history” of education and the history of comparative education itself, as a field of study. It is possible to note a separation between the two – though this is not a hint about preferences for the future, on the contrary. The second section of the chapter makes distinctions among styles of comparative histories of education themselves: the institutional bases and theoretical perspectives within which they were written begin to diverge. The third layer in the analysis is the theme of the “international.” International histories of education hint at how historians of education and the histories of education they write respond to new “readings of

R. Cowen (✉)
Institute of Education, University College London, London, UK
e-mail: robert.cowen@ucl.ac.uk

the global.” The fourth section of the chapter addresses the transnational motif. There is also a brief conclusion which offers some cautious comments – though they might be, more sensibly, thought of as guesses about possibilities.

Keywords

History of education · Comparative · Transnational · International · Comparative education

Introduction

The range of work done to the general rubric of “the history of education” (as indicated by journals such as *History of Education*, *History of Education Quarterly*, and *Paedagogica Historica*) is remarkable even though in many universities in many countries the field of study is affected by the external political pressures of (what Guy Neave has called) “evaluative States.” Those pressures – external to the university but now absorbed by the management systems of more and more universities – include expectations that the field of study will have “relevance” and “impact,” preferably immediate, on economic and social life (Cowen 2012).

This is an unfortunate redefinition of “quality” in university work and a new form of simplistic social disciplining and re-domestication of knowledge at exactly the time when the world is again becoming more complex. The comforting buzz of the mantra “globalization” is being interrupted by shrill questions about new forms of political populism, withdrawals from notions of an international community, and a changing balance of international political power. Examples include what has come to be called “Brexit” – a slick name for a sour parochialism; the rejection of an emerging international consensus on climate control policies; the beginnings of cultural, economic, and political self-absorption (the USA); reassertions of old forms of territorial hegemony (Russia); and newly assertive views about regional balances of power (Iran; and China in the Pacific). How serious historical change gradually helps to redefine academic fields of study is unclear and often takes a long time to be visible (Tröhler 2013a, b); but any optimistic expectations that comparative and international history will somehow linearly “progress” from their present configuration seems improbable.

Paradoxically then this is a good moment to step back and ask: What counts as comparative history of education, international history of education, and transnational history of education? The intention is to try to sketch the changing work agenda in comparative and international and transnational histories of education and to note, even if briefly, the politics of the times in which these branches of history-writing were embedded. What kind of history of education was being done and why and how does that reflect not merely the interests of individual scholars but the “reading of the global” (Cowen 2000, 2009) within which the work was framed? “History” itself (that is to say, contemporary history, politics, economics) disturbs fields of study and forces questions about concepts such as “comparative” and “transnational.”

“The” Comparative History of Education

There isn't one, of course, although there are several names which helped to pioneer a fresh sense of the comparative history of education in the first half of the twentieth century. These names would certainly include (in alphabetical rather than chronological order) Nicholas Hans, Robert Edward Hughes, Isaac Kandel, Michael Sadler, Friedrich Schneider, and Robert Ulich. Their individual writings have been analyzed in specialist articles, as well as in a range of publications which can be loosely labeled histories of comparative education (Cowen and Kazamias 2009; Manzon 2011; Noah and Eckstein 1969). So there is a bit of a muddle and overlap between comparative histories of education and the history of comparative education.

However, both themes – the comparative history of education and the history of comparative education – can be dealt with because they interweave for a while and then separate in an abrupt way. The persons who began, *de facto*, to offer interpretations of a comparative history of education – Nicholas Hans, Isaac Kandel, and so on – had considerable differences between them, but they also gave themselves a nasty common problem, as they tried to think both historically and comparatively. Kandel, following some of the ideas of Michael Sadler (his teacher), offers the most succinct definition of what became a major muddle: “Comparative education, the study of current educational theories and practices as influenced by *different backgrounds*, is but the prolongation of the history of education into the present. . .” (Kandel 1933, p. xix) [*Italics added*].

This proposition – too casual as a generalization and too locked into its own historical times to be a good prediction – instantly blurs any distinction between comparative history and comparative education. As if that were not enough, Kandel offers a new obfuscation with his phrasing about the “different backgrounds” of educational systems, a theme which rapidly gained the technical label: “context.” However, it is far from clear what is “a background” or “a context.” Clearly, “context” includes the “tyranny of distance” which affects education in Australia and Canada. It can also include sand and later the remarkable combination of sand and oil in Saudi Arabia. In certain countries or areas, a crucial part of “context” which affects education provision and educational policy is mountains (e.g., the Andes).

Thus versions of the comparative history of education – and comparative education itself – have to overcome a major muddle, caught in the vacuous older vocabulary of “backgrounds” and a variety of (vacuous) contemporary uses of the word “contexts.” The solutions offered early by the historians included an emphasis on a range of “forces and factors,” *Triebkräfte* in Schneider's (1947) vocabulary. The problem of “backgrounds” was differently dealt with by Nicholas Hans (1958). He asserted the importance of “the factors” of languages, race, religious traditions, geographic and economic circumstances, and political philosophies. Hans used these “factors,” with some success to discuss patterns of educational reform in places as varied as Belgium and South Africa, Latin America, and the USA and the USSR.

This theme of “forces and factors” overlapped with (though finally it became separate from) an earlier tradition of understanding the “foreignness” of foreign

systems of education by emphasizing the theme of “national character.” This was not unusual as an interpretive perspective in the nineteenth century, in politics, in the press, and gradually in academic and historical interpretations of the ways in which societies were – and could be – successful in certain “historic missions.” For example, the rise and confirmation of aggressive nationalisms, after the American and French revolutions, gave a sharper edge to national stereotyping (the “roast *bifs*” for the British, the Russian bear); concepts that labeled moments of political mobilization such as “manifest destiny”; a variety of “civilizing missions”; and racial stereotyping confirmed in ideologies of empire (Mackenzie 1986; Mangan 1993) – though it should not be assumed that racial stereotyping and notions of superiority were confined to the period after the American and French revolutions or to European imperialists (Colley 2002). By the time of Vernon Mallinson (1957), the theme of national character had become very explicit as a theme within comparative education.

Unfortunately, both themes – “backgrounds” (forces outside the school system) and the concept of national character – created distortions and vacuities within the comparative history of education, not least perhaps because the concept of national character rapidly degenerates into inaccurate banalities about the Germans being hard workers, the French being rational, and the Belgians being both; and the concept of “context” can triumphantly be absorbed within positivist social science discourse as a set of “variables.”

Indeed, paradoxically, this is how the rescue occurred. In the 1960s there was a squabble about whether “history” or “science” was the best way to approach any themes which comparative education might be pursuing. The debate and its casualties have been discussed in detail (Kazamias 2009). The clash between the old forms of comparative histories of education being written by Hans et al. and the new “scientific” comparative education meant that the use of a comparative perspective in the history of education migrated, usually to history of education departments.

Basically, comparative histories of education were now going to be written by historians. A new sharpness emerged in the literature, a literature which still reads well today (Archer 1979; Green 1990; Müller et al. 1987; Skocpol 1979). These books are different from what had been offered before and rather different from each other. Margaret Scotford Archer’s work initially came out of her interests in Europe and had a loose relationship with the concern at that time, in the UK, for European studies (Vaughan and Archer 1971). Andy Green’s 1990 book began life as a doctoral thesis with no specific connection at that moment with a specialist department of history or a department of comparative education. Theda Skocpol’s work on social revolutions was written in the USA and was not directly addressed to education; but it certainly was an implicit invitation to think much harder about comparative histories of education and one of its peculiar silences. However, the work as a body had an interesting pattern: it was comparisons of national states. What were being compared were forms of nationalism, the shaping of nations, the role of education in that, and the complexity of those relationships with the formation of States particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth century. When the theme was extended, in terms of space, for example, to include China or Japan and Japanese education before and after 1868 (in the work, say, of Herbert Passin), the theme opened out to include the motif of “modernization.”

Thus, the distinguishing question here is not: Were there histories of education being written? There were. Clearly there is a major corpus of specialist work on the history of schools and schooling, the history of teacher education and vocational technical education, the history of universities, and the history of educational ideas in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, East Asia, and Latin America (NASH et al. 1965). In that sense, by the 1970s, the available literature on the history of education was very large.

Granted that there was then a major body of historical work, the question shifts to how to construe the concept of “comparative” history.” Given that historical narratives about education by specialist historians included debates about internal colonialism in the USA, the nature of Indigenous education in Canada, the treatment of Maori in New Zealand, and the *Escola Nova* movement in Brazil in the 1930s, a “comparative” history of education can be placed on the table as it were – almost literally – simply by juxtaposition of similar narratives. This is not too dissimilar from finding out, empirically, what time children get up in the morning and go to sleep at night – and how many hours they spend in between in school – in Finland, Scotland, and Japan. The narratives, one in words and the other in numbers, have the *form* of “a comparative statement”; but both narratives are intellectually empty and epistemically pointless. De facto, they are lists of similarities and differences.

Comparative work needs two things. Certainly, it needs a *tertium comparationis*. This might be “totalitarianism and education,” though that concept needs a lot of work before work can begin. Simpler might be a universalizing statement about human rights or the concept of “Education For All” on which a great deal of work has been done already. “Education For All” is a *tertium comparationis*, but it is of no intellectual complexity in itself (even if why it is not being achieved is a considerable puzzle for a range of social sciences).

Thus comparative analysis in education does not begin in method. It begins only when there is an interpretative idea on offer, such as Max Weber’s sense of the historical forces which produced a shift from the education of the cultivated to the education of the expert. What a research question about the number of hours (etc.) in Finland, Japan, and Scotland lacks – as does the juxtaposition of approximately similar historical narratives about, say, Indigenous identities and education – is an initial theory. The “form” (juxtaposition) is right but the form is empty. The test of comparative work is not what was in the archives but what idea was brought to the archives (Tröhler 2013a, b). The path to fame of the comparative historian of education is marked by both archive and by theories to interpret “context.”

The *Genius Loci* and the Writing of Comparative History

Hence it was a good symbolic marker in the writing of comparative histories of education when Scotford Archer (Archer 1979) offered an explicit theoretical position against which to analyze narrations of education in England and France, Russia, and Denmark. The point thereafter was that Archer performed the comparative act within one large text, characterized by deliberate juxtaposition (the

comparative “form”) and by explicit theory. In general terms, there is nothing historically startling about this. History is normally written to a thesis. An interpretation of the history of the USA can be offered in terms of a thesis (such as Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” or a motif about immigration and *e pluribus unum* and “the one best system” of education). However, among the things which were refreshing about Archer’s work was that it was part of a long slow (and as yet incomplete) rescue of comparative education per se from a pathological concentration on method (Holmes 1986), an excessive concern for the contemporary, and a fixation on “policy” and gradualist reform.

However, although that moment was intellectually important – the peculiar parochialism of the comparative education English-speaking community (of that period) and its dislike of history had been revealed – the growing literature on comparative histories of education contained, at this point, two more important strategic questions.

One question which slowly emerged, stimulated by illustrations of the potentials of juxtaposing narratives about the histories and educational patterns of different “foreign places” called countries or nations, was the theme of “methodological nationalism.” Martin Lawn, whose historical sensitivities and continuous alertness to new themes (2013) in the comparative history of education have been impressive, was one historical and comparative scholar who noted this issue, not least as he moved to Scotland – a bit of a culture shock – and became heavily involved in educational research in the European context.

The second strategic question was the intellectual rootedness of the emergent comparative histories of education. Illustratively, the comparative histories of education being written by people like Fritz Ringer and Müller and Simon were within a tradition of the writing of history that included Ranke, Collingwood and Butterfield, and Marc Bloch and E. H. Carr (and partly, with Brian Simon, Karl Marx too). Margaret Archer’s work was informed by a historical sensibility, notably for European history, as well as an alertness to sociological theory. In some contrast, Theda Skocpol’s work was informed by a sociological sensibility, and her geographic areas of interest included China and “southern cone” countries (crudely speaking, Latin America). Her thinking was more strongly linked with a tradition of sociological thought that included Tocqueville and Durkheim and Weber (and later, persons such as Bendix and Barrington Moore).

David Crook and Gary McCulloch (2002) have written on the first tradition and the importance of creating an historical sensibility aimed toward a comparative analysis – a comparative historical understanding – of educational systems. However, they begin their analysis by invoking the names of Edmund J. King (who reviewed Margaret Archer’s classic text with considerable professional irritation) and Brian Simon and Asa Briggs, a brilliant British historian who wrote an impeccable history of the BBC and also a history of Marks and Spencer. The second tradition is also a major one, but it insists on invoking different ancestors – in sociology (Skocpol and Somers 1980). This literature is very alert theoretically and struggles with intellectual questions which are not normally raised within the British tradition. However, what is noticeable is that the comparative history of

education is not central to those debates, and there is occasionally a peculiar domestic motif, peculiar because the question of “comparative” is being discussed as if the main struggle is within the American literature as American scholars try to look up and outward from their own society and their own local sociological and historical traditions (Skocpol 2003). Similarly, Gary McCulloch (2011), in a different way and for different reasons, makes it very clear that British history of education is now linked with the *International Standing Conference for the History of Education* (ISCHE) and with major comparative history journals such as *Paedagogica Europaea*.

These small hints of anxiety are understandable. Given contemporary anxieties about methodological nationalism – initially in migration studies (Wimmer and Schiller 2002) but the idea also spread rapidly to history and sociology and political science and the comparative study of education (Dale and Robertson 2009) – there has been a certain amount of self-criticism, as indicated earlier, and a new concern for the concept of “transnational.” However, this is not to say that the theme of the international mobilities of education was absent from the literature. There had been attention given to that theme, but within different intellectual and political frames.

International Education

The theme of the mobility of educational principles, practices, structures, and identities and the comparative interpretation of those mobilities came into the literature in three ways.

First, there were early texts in the USA, very much within the literature of international and comparative education, by Martin Carnoy (1974) and Phillip Altbach and Gail Kelly (1978) on education and colonialism. These texts were very widely read. Retrospectively, what is interesting about them is not the possible range of critique which could be brought to bear on each text. What, retrospectively, is interesting is that both of these books had as their core words “colonies and education” and “education as cultural imperialism.”

In the 1970s, both choices were interesting as a version of “reading the global” (Cowen 2009). At that stage there was no suggestion that the Cold War was coming to an end; though in general the radical student movement of the late 1960s which had received worldwide publicity was dying down. There is no explicit suggestion in either book that America was building an empire, but clearly both books contain a critique of the USA itself. There is the explicit choice and illustration, in the edited book of Altbach and Kelly, of the motif of “internal colonialism” which chimes well with the very severe questions, which were being asked then (as now) domestically, about race and minorities in the USA. And Martin Carnoy, with his sense of the Latin American literature, also implied a critique, though this time of the USA’s external politics: that the USA might be contributing to *dependencia* in Latin America, not least through education as cultural imperialism. The word “empire” is not used as an analytical concept, though in international politics, the USA had in its foreign policy been explicitly concerned about various European Empires, before, during, and more

strenuously after World War II, even before the Cold War itself became ostentatiously visible and even before the invasion of Suez in 1956.

A second perspective was very different. It was grounded in major sociological thinking and was written with the field of study known, especially in the USA, as “international and comparative education.” It was not explicitly concerned with creating comparative histories of education; though in principle a direct link to that literature could have been written. The paper which almost linked the two fields was Robert Arnove’s paper (1980) on world systems analysis. Its core perspective was an early interpretative vision of education in what – perhaps too soon and too casually and too loosely – was later termed “globalization” in educational circles. Of course Arnove’s paper was “a reading of the global,” but it was a specific reading – as indeed was “economic globalization” in early academic writing by people like David Held (until the word became a media term and drifted across and blanketed educational studies). Arnove’s analysis was theoretically informed and drew on Immanuel Wallerstein’s thinking. Perhaps it was an opportunity missed for the international and comparative specialists to begin to use an historical perspective. Certainly, the opportunity was not taken up (nor were its nonhistorical aspects taken up in any sustained way in the main US journal of comparative education). Notions of “world system” and “world culture” were absorbed into a neo-institutional sociological framework that has become a major contemporary perspective in the USA as a way to interpret educational systems and societies.

This was, however, very different from the British situation. Paradoxically, in the UK, a peculiar division of academic labor – precisely related to international education in one meaning of the term – prevented the comparative specialists from looking at colonialism and empire. The comparative education specialists, in addition to their short-term concerns about educational policy, concentrated on comparisons within a space termed “the northern crescent” – an expression coined by George Bereday, the major specialist after 1945 in comparative education in Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York City. In the UK, and notably in the Institute of Education in London, another group of specialists known initially (from the late 1920s) as specialists in education in colonial areas were busy developing the “Third World,” much of which – if you looked backwards, i.e., thought historically – had been part of the British Empire. The problem was not to analyze and understand “the empire” and education but to help reform education in its aftermath. There was a silence about empires.

In contrast, historians of education in the UK made the theme of empire into a major topic within comparative histories of education (Mangan 1988; Wilkinson 1964). Of course work on the British Empire has also been a major theme in mainstream historical writing – Oxford University Press published five volumes on the topic of the British Empire (Louis 1999); Niall Ferguson (2003) has published a major, if perhaps a rather kind, interpretation; and Brendon (2007) in contrast concentrated on its decline and fall. The “new” interpretations that are being offered increasingly show the complex interrelationships – the multidirectional relationships between “Britain” and “the Empire” (Thompson 2005; Wilson 2004); and this is also increasingly true for interpretations of the “British Empire” and education – McCulloch (2009), for example, uses this as his main interpretative device.

However – and it is both understandable and interesting – one of the main lines of analysis in terms of education and the British Empire is the theme of elites, both local elites shaped within the empire and elites in Britain for whom empire was to be a career (Whitehead 2003). Leinster-Mackay’s analysis (1988) of what is called “the prep school” is not a pun about empire but a reference to the first stage of the private sector of education, which fed into the so-called public schools which were themselves privately funded. Typically, from such schools, children went on to careers in which they were expected to be leaders (though the future might be via Sandhurst, the elite military academy for the army, or formation of an appropriate “image of conduct character and manner” to use a phrase of Basil Bernstein’s) in Oxford or perhaps Cambridge. Not all British Foreign Secretaries and Prime Ministers have been educated through that route (Rich 1989), but many have. Not all British Foreign Secretaries have enjoyed playing rugby, but certainly achievements on the sport field were respected – and part of an appropriate image of conduct, character, and manner – and properly imperial (Mangan 1986).

There is then a considerable literature which has (here) been termed “international” and which can be linked to the theme of “empire,” though of course the concept of “international” could be linked to any mobile educational idea, practice, policy, or educational structure (such as a model of a university which had “traveled”). How then to make a distinction between “international” histories of education and “transnational” histories of education – particularly when (as was indicated earlier) one meaning of the term “transnational” is already linked to work on migration and has indirectly led to questions about methodological nationalism?

Transnational Histories of Education

There are four ways to begin to locate the new visibility of the term “transnational histories of education.” One is to note changes in international politics, and the other three points, which are emphasized here, are epistemic.

The political point – which implies for scholars a new “reading of the global” – is that the phrasing “transnational” also reflects a world of new *realpolitik*, partially hidden by the very visible ideology of “globalization.” This new “transnational” world is marked by shifts in patterns of political power, new forms of economic relation between geographic areas, new forms of governance above nation-state level, and changed mobilities. These changed mobilities are not merely those noted by theories of economic globalization, such as mobile capital, labor, sites of production, and information, but also ideas, mobile academics and academic knowledge, cultural assumptions, as well as hegemonic notions of secular educational excellence.

In the struggle to comprehend and label this “new world,” new epistemic puzzles have been addressed by academics. The first relatively simple epistemic puzzle is a recognition of the rigidities of the classic concept of “transfer.” That older terminology captures a rather mechanical metaphor of a linear unidirectional movement of things (or soccer players) from one place to another. The word transfer because of its

history and use in comparative education also implies – as an agent of transfer – national States, empires, or supranational agents, like the World Bank recommending a universalized and universalizing policy in education to many countries at once. The concept of “transfer” also links uncomfortably to a continuing motif in comparative education for the last 200 years: notions of a science of policy transfer (Steiner-Khamsi 2012) and the creation of a geometry of insertion, in which the problem of context is solved.

The second motif captured in the concept of transnational comparative histories – for example, in the work on migration – is an increased emphasis on the theme of personal networks, mobile immigrants, flows of memory and aspirations for the future, and the shaping and retention of multiple identities in one person. This is relatively obvious in terms of migrating families and the concept of the human networks of communication by “unmeltable ethnics,” but it is also clear that the theme has touched some of the recent work on education and empires, including the theme “the empire strikes back.” People are reinserted into academic analysis, and the tendency toward thinking about abstracted social actors and reification (the State; the Humboltian university; “reform requirements”) is slowed.

Of equal importance is that work on migration has at its center the theme of border. It was routine assumptions about border, their legal impermeabilities, and even their righteous cultural impermeabilities (of which there have been recent real-life political echoes) which helped to cause a crisis and major disputation within studies of migration and helped to focus the theme of “methodological nationalism.” Migration and mobile-minority studies, far more rapidly than (say) traditional comparative education or historical studies of empire, bring the theme of “border” to the center of analysis, and they have forced a reassessment of academic thinking in academic political theory and in historical perspectives on intercultural education (Gundara and Bash 2012).

The third way to think about the theme of transnational comparative histories of education is the most challenging. Within the emerging aspirations for writing transnational histories of education, there are contradictory epistemic currents and potentials for confusion, not least those inherited from “comparative histories of education” and “international histories of education.”

The early work on “comparative histories” addressed the national and specific formations of nationalism, such as fascism. To label such work as being captured by the label “methodological nationalism” would be accurate, but almost pointless. The “reading of the global” in the interwar years by the comparative historians of education was about instabilities. One theme was the potential international instabilities implied by the rhetoric of expansionist State-socialism and fascism which clearly threatened the relatively stable empires of the French and the British. Isaac Kandell was alert to the implications of Nazism, and Ulich began to move toward idealist pleas for internationalism. The second aspect of instability, a concern of Nicholas Hans, was for harmony within nations characterized by multiple languages, races, and political philosophies. The space was Europe; the historical time was European. The *tertium comparationis* was forces and factors; and the implicit theory of progress was advance toward a more liberal-democratic world through a Lockean

vision of rationalist politics of the kind which had informed the creation and early work of the League of Nations.

In contrast, the shift into historical sociology and the history of educational systems had as its *tertium comparationis* “the State,” and its secular vision – and theory – was modernization. Forming the State well is merely a step toward modernizing well. Paradoxically, narrative time is historical, but the theoretical vision is of a forward momentum, of future time, of convergence, and of societies as efficient, rationally ordered, and administratively neat. The implicit emphasis in the historical work was on the future. The space which was exemplary gradually shifted from Europe (disgraced by irrational and extreme politics) to the USA. One version of what a universal model of societies should look like was captured in the Talcott Parsons pattern variables of achievement/ascription, collective orientation/self-orientation, and so on. Against such a model, clearly some societies are traditional and by extension “backward” such as caste-bound India or Confucian China. Clearly their educational systems also needed to be “modernized,” as they did in what was beginning to be called “the Third World.” Thus Japan was in the mid-1960s a serious theoretical puzzle for historical sociologists and for comparative educationists. Japan was economically and educationally successful. However – given that the Emperor had been a god until 1946, that Japan had escaped both the Enlightenment and secular political revolution, and that it was marked by considerable collectivity orientation and affectivity in major economic and educational institutions – Japan was not explicable. That poses a problem that has not gone away, a problem which will sooner or later affect what to look for within emergent transnational histories of education.

Compared with the theoretical complexities of comparative historical sociologies of education, the theme of colonialism and imperialism is simpler. The exception is the work of Antonio N6voa (not least on Portuguese colonialism and education). That directly reflects his theorization of the history of comparative education as involving, potentially, both constructing “the other” and understanding “the other” (N6voa and Yariv-mashal 2003). In contrast, the sudden excursions in the USA into the topic of education and colonialism and by the British historians of education into theme of “the empire” are relatively simple, theoretically. As indicated earlier, the accounts of Altbach and Kelly and of Martin Carnoy offer an indirect critique of the internal and the external politics of the USA. The British emphasis within studies of the international history of education (though it includes work on minorities in several colonies and Dominions and work to the theme of “the empire strikes back”) is of “transfer” and, at best, tips toward studies of imperial leadership. Overall, what is peculiar about both the American and the British excursions, into the history of education and “the imperial” and education in the mid-1970s and for the next few decades, is silence on the Cold War and the history of education in earlier empires such as the Austro-Hungarian and Russian.

Thus, what was called earlier “international” history within the history of education was an important moment of transition. By the 1990s, the boundaries of the national, recovered from empires, and with other boundaries of the Cold War and its satellite wars, were about to soften. It was possible to emphasize the global, not merely in loose discourse about globalization, but in the collection of global statistics

by supranational agencies and assumptions by world bodies that there could be “education for all” (in multiple meanings of that expression). Attention began to be drawn to “world system and interrelationship networks” (Schriewer 2000) at a very high level of theoretical complexity (Schriewer 2003). Almost two decades later, it has become possible to suggest that is what happened: certainly Schriewer himself in a Special Issue of *Comparative Education* (2012) constructed links with world system theoreticians and neo-institutionalists, notably those from the USA.

However, arguments in favor of transnational history did not always go in that direction. Some arguments for transitional history are increasingly linked to international political relations theory (Iriye 2013); and within studies in the history of education, the arguments for transnational history of education increasingly took societal modernization trajectories as problematic and avoided the implicit systems-vocabulary of “reception procedures.” Warde’s argument (2013), for example, which “links” Brazil and Turkey in the early twentieth century, is precisely about the non-systematization of things, events, and people. Sobe’s insistence on the significance of “entanglement” as a crucial concept for transnational histories of education and his work with Kowalczyk (Sobe and Kowalczyk 2018) on the concept of “context” and the invocation of *histoire croisée* suggests new levels of complexity for sociological (and historical) theorization. Similarly, the mutating phenomena which Popkewitz (2005, 2013) calls “traveling libraries” and “the Indigenous foreigner” make fluid that was earlier construed as examples of “transfer.” The point – about transnational history in this mode – is that it narrates fluidities, mobilities, “accidents,” unexpected shape-shiftings of “the Indigenous foreigner,” and educational persons (the child, the teacher) or unanticipated educational relations between, say, Brazil and Turkey.

However, it seems probable that the relation between comparative histories of education and transnational histories of education has yet to be fully worked out. Jürgen Kocka has argued “Comparative history and the entangled histories approach are different modes of historical reconstruction. There is a tension between them, but they are not incompatible. One can try to analyse in comparative terms and tell a story, nevertheless. It is not necessary to choose between *histoire comparée* and *histoire croisée*. The aim is to combine them” (Kocka 2003, p. 44).

If transnational history – as has indeed been advocated – will emphasize more and more *histoire croisée*, if transnational history will increasingly emphasize “context” as entanglement, and history itself as the narration of complexity, then the model of history advocated by Elton clashes with the model of history of Collingwood. The “facts” – and the abstract categories needed to construct a comparison – grow unsystematic amid the fluidities of entangled context and *histoire croisée*.

The method of “similarity and difference” necessary, traditionally, to “comparative work” – to establish cause – becomes difficult to unentangle. What we know, while edging closer to a form of historical empathy about education, is that the narrative will not be a narrative that finishes with the simplicity of cause but a narrative which finishes with a heightened sense of mixtures, muddles, and entanglements. In principle the world is not demystified, following Weber. It is re-mystified: made more unpredictable, more tangential, and more magical. The agenda to know the causes of things, *rerum cognoscere causas*, is an ambition old enough to

have first been expressed in Latin and modern enough to have become the motto of the London School of Economics and Political Science linked with the Fabians. The principle becomes problematic.

That maybe a good thing. For far too long, to know the cause of things has been the implicit agenda of what has counted as “history” within comparative education itself. Perhaps what matters and what needs to be seen are not lists of similarities and difference and the causes of difference but the historical and political and sociological and epistemic principles which construct the ordering of difference.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The assumption (by the publisher) that there will be “future directions” is charmingly optimistic. Let us then assume a future, but “directions” can, at best, be asserted.

However, there are likely to be some reassessments, as international politics continue to change. For example, as America begins to come to terms with the fact that it may have an empire (Cooper 2006), it is not impossible that the theme of “colonialism” so central to the international and comparative education literature may be overcome by the theme of “empire,” even if that, at the contemporary moment, is being softened to the point of invisibility by the concept of “soft power” rather than sustained by hard-edged (“realist”) notions of international political relations which exist both in the specialist theoretical literature and in the life of Henry Kissinger. Clearly – as in the past – changing international politics and economics and the categories through which they are seen (the Cold War, isolationism, *dependencia*, feminism, race theory, “globalization,” migration) shape not only options for political and economic change but also the academic translations of the world: academic “readings of the global.” These “academic readings of the global” are at the moment unstable, because the global itself is unstable.

More tentatively, therefore, it may be wise to assert the probability of some continuities before making some guesses about directions. Three continuities may be suggested, without overweening confidence that, were this text to be re-read at the end of a decade, the three continuities suggested here will be visible.

First, there will be confusions. This is not a casual banality. It is not even a banality: what is taken to be “history” or “comparative education” or the “comparative history of education” is always being rewritten. The significant question is: How quickly? Some rewritings of a field of study may not survive the retirement of a specific professor and the dispersal of disciples. Some rewritings of a field of study, such as that done by Norbert Elias, may take an inordinate amount of time to have impact. Granted that any topic – such as school furniture – can be studied by historians and illustrated by a range of examples from Argentina to Zanzibar, what makes such history comparative or international or transnational or important? The broad answer is the theory within which it is embedded. A theory of materiality, and temporality, and spatiality can transform the concept of “school furniture.” It shifts from being a theme of theoretical triviality, an urgent practical problem for school administrators or classroom teachers to deal with, to being a theme of some analytical power, because

it reveals the construction of social identity, the distribution of inequalities, including perhaps gender divisions, IQ, or previous academic achievement.

Second, particular individuals will maintain their own academic agenda. It is crucial that “pressures” – external to the university but now imported by management systems into more and more universities, and such pressures include expectations that the field of study will have “relevance” and “impact,” preferably immediate, on economic and social life – do not marginalize or trivialize the personal agenda of dedicated academics. This is perhaps especially true of those who come close to being specialists in comparative historical work. It takes time to master the language(s), it is not simple to ensure a basic residence period in the “foreign place” to begin to grasp the culture, and regular and easy access to archives is almost certainly never going to be regular or easy. It takes decades for that kind of identity to be acquired. Within comparative education, there are examples of such persons – Janusz Tomiak, formerly of the Institute of Education in the University of London or David Phillips from the University of Oxford. However, there are very few persons who can simultaneously function as good comparative educationists, serious historians of international education, and write papers on the interrelations of German and British education and also on periodization in the comparative history of education (Phillips 2002). This kind of “continuity” which is dependent on some notion of university time (and not on destructive managerialist notions of time and “impact”) is fragile.

The third continuity is that there will be an unexpected explosion of “topics,” a changing flurry of new “normal puzzles.” At the moment, the cutting edge of that explosion includes gender and identity motifs, but clearly there is also the question of else may be given “hot topic” status. One such candidate is religion and education, a theme very much open to comparative and transnational treatment but also a theme which has in the last 20 or so years been relatively neglected, while the theme of economic globalization and new forms of the governance of educational systems emerged as “comparative” topics. Another candidate for hot topic status is terrorism and the construction of peace, about which we are very ill-equipped to comment (as educationists, we tend to embrace Kant rather than Hobbes or Rousseau on the state of Poland).

And so, after a sketch of continuities, the directions? That is easier, provided existing international political and economic relations change relatively slowly and provided the history of comparative education itself is re-thought along the lines being developed by Antonio Nóvoa about which some early hints already exist in the literature (Nóvoa and Yariv-mashal 2003).

There will be three new directions:

- First, the theme of historical sociology will regain momentum (Calhoun 1996; Seddon et al. 2018).
- Second, writing comparative histories of education will become much more demanding and intellectually complex (Iriye 2013; Kocka 2003; Tröhler 2011; Werner and Zimmermann 2006).
- Third, there will be a challenge to all comparative histories of education (and comparative education) posed by K. Chen’s question: “Asia as method.”

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