

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Studies

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION - ED 631

Instructor: Dr. Elena Lisovskaya

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Comparative Education. This course is an introduction to comparative (cross-national and historical) education, a field concerned with studying education in its larger societal context. Comparative perspective is viewed as an indispensable tool to recognize and examine the similarities and differences between the educational patterns and their societal determinants around the world. This is important for a better understanding of the nature of the relationships between school and society in general, and in particular societal settings.

The course will explore major theoretical and methodological approaches in comparative education research as well as examine representative educational systems and issues in education around the world. The latter will include the development of modern education, educational change in transitional societies, diversity in education and academic achievement, the role of education in promoting open-mindedness and reducing inter-cultural conflicts.

This course is of particular importance for American teachers, because it will provide a comparative perspective on American schools, and enhance their understanding of the social factors that have been shaping the schools in this country. It will acquaint the teachers with the means used by educators around the world to approach common problems. It will also help the teachers avoid simplistic interpretations of the origins of and the solution to these problems.

COURSE FORMAT

This is an intensive reading, writing, and discussion course. Students will be involved in presentation of reading material, its thorough analysis, and summarizing the readings. The course will combine lecture, students' presentations, and discussion format. Typically, every class will begin with a brief introduction given by the teacher, and then followed by students' presentations and class discussions. Attending the Midwest *Comparative and International Education* Annual meeting and writing a report on it will be an important and exciting element of class work (Fall/01 only).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- (1) to learn about the use of comparative cross-national and historical research in education;
- (2) to get acquainted with major types of educational systems, and the origins of the modern system of education;
- (3) to explore selected issues and themes in a variety of western and non- western countries;
- (4) to develop understanding of similarities and differences between the schools around the world in relation to their historic, cultural, political, social, and economic contexts;
- (5) to compare the U.S. education system with the systems in other countries, and to learn to analyze its specific character via using comparative education method;
- (6) to get acquainted with the means used by foreign educators to approach common educational problems; and
- (7) to learn to find and interpret statistical data on education collected by domestic and international agencies (The World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, etc.).

WEEKLY TOPICS & READING ASSIGNMENTS
(Core Topics and Readings that I consider essential and include every time I offer the course)

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: A Science of Comparative Education: Origins, Purposes, Use

Required Readings:

Noach & Eckstein (1969) Toward a Science of Comparative Education. (The Macmillan Co.), pp. 3-33.

Thomas (1995) The nature of comparative education. In International and Comparative Education, pp. 1-7.

Noach (1984) The use and abuse of comparative education. *Comparative Education Review* 28(4), 551-562.

Week 3: A Science of Comparative Education: Methodological Issues and Problems of Method

Required Readings:

Eckstein, M. (1983). The comparative mind. In J.Schriewer & B.Holms (Eds.), Theories and Methods in Comparative Education. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang), pp. 87-113.

Farrell (1979) The necessity of comparisons in the study of education: the salience of science and problem of compatability. Presidential Address. *Comparative Education Review* 23(1), 3-16.

Ragin, C. (1989). New directions in comparative research. In M.L.Kohn (Ed.), Cross-National Research in Sociology. (Sage Publications), pp. 57-76.

Le Thanh Khoi (1988). Conceptual problems in inter-cultural comparisons. In J. Schriewer & B.Holms (Eds.), Theories and Methods in Comparative Education (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang), pp. 87-113.

**Weeks 4-5: Major Theoretical Approaches in Comparative Education,
Their Application and Critique**

Required Readings:

Kerr, C. et al. (1960). Industrialism and Industrial Man (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 33-39.

Carnoy, M. (1982). Education for alternative development. *Comparative Education Review* 26(2), 73-90.

Noah, H. & M. Eckstein (1988). Dependency theory in comparative education: twelve lessons from the literature. In J.Schriewer B.Holms (Eds.), Theories and Methods in Comparative Education.(Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang), pp. 165-192.

Boli, J. & F. Ramirez (1992). Compulsory schooling in the Western cultural context. In R. Arnove, P. Altbach, & G. Kelly (Eds.), Emergent Issues in Education. Comparative Perspectives. (N.Y.: State University of New York Press), pp. 25-38.

Heyman, R. (1979). Comparative education from an ethnomethodological perspective. *Comparative Education Review* 15(3), 241-249.

Holmes, B. (1984). Paradigm shifts in comparative education. *Comparative Education Review* 28(4), 584-604.

**Week 6: Modern Systems of Education: Origins, Typology, Mutual Influences.
U.S. System of Education**

Required Readings:

Cole (1960) Development of modern school systems In Cole, L. A History of Education (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston), pp. 595-615.

Barnard, H.C. (1969) Education and The French Revolution (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 223-246.

Systems of Education. In The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, pp.115-132; 5-7.

Hurn (1993) The organization of U.S. education. In The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon), pp. 22-29.

Epstein, E. (1992). Social paradoxes of American education. *Oxford Review of Education* 18(3), 201-212.

Week 7: Context of Education: Its Meaning and Importance for Understanding Education (I)

Required Readings:

- Le Thanh Khoi (1986) Toward a general theory of education. *Comparative Education Review* 30(1), 215-232.
- Mitchell (1993) Protestantism and educational provision. In W. Tulasiewicz & Cho-Yee Te, World Religions and Educational Practice (N.Y.: Cassell), pp. 125-135.
- Gao (1998) Cultural context of school science teaching and learning in the People's Republic of China, *Science Education* 82(1), 1-13.
- Turner (1960) Sponsored and contest mobility and the school system, *American Sociological Review* 25(6), 855-867.

Weeks 8-9: Context of Education (II)

Students are required to select any six articles (three per week) from the list below, and study them at home. In class, students discuss and summarize the selected articles in the light of the idea of the "context of education." The goal is to demonstrate the impact of various types of context on the content and form of educational institutions. [Group work].

- K. Sharpe (1997) The Protestant ethic and the spirit of Catholicism: ideological and institutional constraints on system change in English and French primary schooling, *Comparative Education* 33(3), 327-347.
- C. Planel (1997) National cultural values and their role in learning: a comparative ethnographic study of state primary schooling in England and France, *Comparative Education* 33(3), 349-373.
- P. W. Cookson, Jr., & C.H. Persell (1985) English and American residential secondary schools: a comparative study of the reproduction of social elites, *Comparative Education Review* 29(3), 283-298.
- N. Sato, & M. McLaughlin. (1992). Context matters: teaching in Japan and in the United States, *Phi Delta Kappan*, January, 359-366.
- M. White (1987) Motivation and mores. In The Japanese educational Challenge (N.Y.: Free Press), pp. 20-49.
- M. Z. Booth (1997) Western schooling and traditional society in Swaziland. *Comparative Education* 33(3), 433-451.
- C. Sorensen (1994) Success and education in South Korea. *Comparative Education Review* 38(1), 10-35.

- D. Baker, C. Riordan, & M. Schaub (1995) The effects of sex-grouped schooling on achievement: the role of national context. *Comparative Education Review* 39(4), 468-481.
- M. Carnoy (1998) National voucher plans in Chile and Sweden: did privatization reforms make for better education? *Comparative Education Review* 42(3), 309-337.
- Ji-Sun Chung (1994) Women's unequal access to education in South Korea. *Comparative Education Review* 38(4), 487-505.

Weeks 10-15: VARIABLE ISSUE-BASED TOPICS

(The list below reflects the topics that I used to offer teaching *Comparative Education* course. I give different selection every semester I teach the course, and the readings vary)

- Cross-national studies of academic achievement
- Education under and after communism
- Educational changes in the course of social and political transformation. Focus on curricular change
- Colonial and postcolonial education
- Education and social mobility
- Education of women
- Cross-cultural contrasts and communication
- Education of immigrants
- International students in the USA
- Religion and education
- Educational transfer
- Educational development around the world
- Societies in transition and educational reform
- Social stratification and educational opportunity
- Ethnic, linguistic, and regional differentiation and education
- Open/closed mind and education
- Cultural clashes