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# COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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**LAXMI BOOK PUBLICATION**



**Price: 500/-**

## **COMPARATIVE EDUCATION**

**M. Brindhamani**

**K. Marisamy**

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- **M. Brindhamani**

- **K. Marisamy**

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# UNIT 1:

## CONCEPT OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

***Dr. S. Prakash,***

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### **The Meaning of Comparative Education**

Naturally, human beings are in the habit of making comparison of the things that are around them particularly when such things exist in different places. This may be done as a result of man's desire to know the relationship existing between, or among the things being compared. Man may also involve himself in this kind of a business when he wants to choose between two things before him. The idea of comparison is not peculiar to the people in the business of education alone. The children at home or anywhere do make comparison between their parents because one of them may be more loving than the other. The school pupils also make a comparison of their teachers particularly when the teachers are not with them. The parents themselves can make a comparison of their children morally and academically.

Comparison can take place wherever we have two or more things at the same time either for the purpose of having a better understanding of the relationship existing between them or for the purpose of having a better choice. Like other concepts, comparative education is a concept that attracts varied interpretations or definitions. In other words, there are as many definitions as there are many Educational Comparativists.

Adeyinka (1994) gives the following definitions for the concept.



- a. A study of two or more education systems.
- b. A study of how the philosophy, objectives and aims, policy and practice of education in other countries influence the general development, policy and practice of education in a particular country.
- c. A study of how the development of education in the past, across the ages and continents, has influenced the development of education in particular countries.
- d. A study of the school systems of two or more countries, and of the administrative machineries set up to implement or to control the implementation of government policies at various levels of education systems.

Comparative Education according to Good (1962) is a field of study dealing with the comparison of current educational theory and practice in different countries for the purpose of broadening and deepening understanding of educational problems beyond the boundaries of one's own country. From the above definitions, the study of Comparative education allows the person involved to have a better understanding of the system of education outside his own country.

To Kandel (1957), Comparative Education is the comparison of various philosophies of education based not only on theories but the actual practices which prevail from this above definition, Kandel is of the opinion that comparative education goes beyond the comparison of education philosophies but also includes the comparison of the real education practices. Perhaps, from the definition, comparative education can be regarded as being pragmatic.

In his own contribution to the concept of comparative Education, Mallinson (1975) defines the subject as: a systematic examination of other cultures and other systems of education deriving from those cultures in order to discover resemblances and differences, and why variant solutions have been attempted (and with what result) to problems that are often common to all.

In his own remark on the concept of Comparative education, Adejumobi (1994) defines the concept as a critical study of educational similarities and differences prevailing with a particular society or culture or among various societies and cultures.

From the definition given by Adejumobi, it is obvious that the idea of comparing educational systems is not peculiar to countries or societies alone but it can as well take place within a country or society.

In the same vein, Osokoya (1992) observed that: Comparative Education could be the comparison of educational theory and practice within a society, state, region and nations ... that scholars could engage in the comparison of educational programmes, theories and practices even within one society. Therefore, there could be a comparative study of educational programmes within the local governments of a state, between states of a country and between countries of a continent.

Alabietal (1998) sees comparative education as; a way of comparing and contrasting different educational systems at national, infra-national as well as international levels. The major implications of their definition is that comparison of educational philosophies, systems and practices is not peculiar to two cultures or countries alone but it can also be localized as it has been rightly pointed out by the other scholars in the field.

In his own reaction to the concept of Comparative education, Awolola (1986) defines the subject as the study of aims and objectives of education, the curriculum methods of teaching, teacher - student relationships, school calendar, mode of discipline, design of school buildings, school administration among others which may be at the international or national levels.

### **The Scope of Comparative Education**

The term "scope" according to Longman dictionary of contemporary English could mean:

- (a) The area within the limit of a question, subject, action etc.
- (b) Space or chance for actions or thought.

From the above, scope of comparative education means the area or areas covered by the discipline. The scope of the subject also connotes the various subjects or disciplines from where Comparative education draws its information directly or indirectly.

A critical look at the various definitions of the discipline no doubt reveals that Comparative Education is an interdisciplinary subject since it relies on other subjects to be able to accomplish its objectives. As an interdisciplinary subject, its scope covers the historical development of education right from the Roman as well as the Greek civilization. It also includes the historical development of non-formal education in any country of study. The discipline has its scope extended to the purpose or purposes of education systems of the countries being studied, an investigation into the similarities as well as differences existing in the educational practices of the countries under investigation.

However, subjects from where Comparative Education draws its contents include the following:

(a) History of Education (b) Philosophy of Education (c) Sociology of Education

(d) Anthropology (e) Economics (f) Geography (g) Psychology (h) Statistics

(i) Literature (j) Political geography (k) Political science and (l) The International relations. Above explanation clearly shows that the subject is not independent of other subjects; it is a discipline that relates to other subjects for the accomplishment of its aims and objectives. It may be reasonably concluded that the interdisciplinary nature of the subject has contributed to the wideness of the discipline.

### **The Need of Comparative Education**

Comparative education like other disciplines being offered in the education institutions is not a purposeless subject. In other words, the subject has some goals which it aims at achieving.

While giving the purpose of comparative education, Hans (1992) concludes that:

The analytical study of these factors from historical perspective and the comparison of attempted solution of resultant problems are the main purpose of comparative education.

It can be concluded from the above that comparative education tries to compare educational problems as well as the solutions applied to such problems with a view to helping one's educational practices.

The purpose of Comparative Education was given by Mallinson (1975) when he noted that: To become familiar with what is being done in some countries ... and why it is done, is a necessary part of the training of all students of educational issues of the day. Only in that way will they be properly fitted to study and understand their own systems and plan intelligently for the future which given the basic cultural changes that have taken place with such astonishing thoroughness throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century's, is going to be one where we are thrown into ever closer contact with other peoples and other cultures. From the above, it is evident that the study of Comparative Education assists the learners to understand their educational systems better.

In his own contribution to the purpose of comparative education, Marc - Antoine Jullien de Paris (1817) cited in Hans (1992) notes that: The purpose of Comparative Education is to perfect national systems with modifications and changes which the circumstances and local conditions would demand.

Like other Education Comparativists, the purpose given above is a pointer to the fact that the study of Comparative education assists in the flexibility of educational systems of one's country.

In the same vein, Kandel cited by Hans (1992) was of the opinion that the primary purpose of comparative education is to discover not only the differences existing in the Education systems of two countries but also the factors that bring about such differences in the educational system.

Also, to Hans (1992) the purpose of Comparative Education

is to discover the underlying principles which govern the development of all national education systems.

#### **Important Reasons for Studying Comparative Education**

- a. To assist in the understanding of one's educational institutions as well as educational practices.
- b. To assist in the understanding of the factors those are responsible for various educational changes.
- c. To educate the students and teachers on the procedure through which educational changes occur.
- d. To contribute not only to the educational development of the society but also to the general development of the society.
- e. To serve as an academic discipline.
- f. To assist in solving one's educational problems
- g. To open one's eyes to the educational philosophies, theories and practices of other countries.
- h. To assist both the students and teachers of discipline in gathering reliable information concerning educational system.
- i. To assist in the Promotion of international relationship.
- j. To contribute to the formulation of a country's educational systems.

#### **Aims and Objectives of Comparative Education**

According to Harold Noah (1985), and Farooq Joubish (2009), comparative education has four objectives:

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

Comparative education is often incorrectly assumed to exclusively encompass studies that compare two or more different countries. In fact, since its early days researchers in this field have

often eschewed such approaches, preferring rather to focus on comparisons within a single country over time. Still, some large scale projects, such as the PISA and TIMSS studies, have made important findings through explicitly comparative macro analysis of massive data sets.

### **Uses of Comparative Education**

1. **More Knowledge:** 'Men study foreign educational systems simply because they want to know.' The foremost justification for the studies in comparative education is intellectual.
2. **More Understanding:** By studying foreign educational systems one would be able to understand one's own system better.
3. **More Comparative Readiness:** The study of comparative education helps to develop 'Comparative Readiness'.
4. **More Information:** This study is taken up to have encyclopedic information about educational system and related problems of foreign countries.
5. **More Borrowing:** The study is taken up for a search for institutional forms and practices for transplantation. The study is taken up for selective cultural borrowing.
6. **More Reform:** The study is taken up with a view to reforming one's own educational system.
7. **Better Leadership:** The study aims at developing the ability based on the knowledge of ends as well as means, to exercise intelligent leadership in educational enterprise.
8. **Universal Theories:** The study may lead to establishment of general theories which would have universal application.
9. **Enrichment of Education:** The study is expected to lead to the enrichment of education considered as a philosophy, a science and a cultural process.
10. **Discovering Differences:** The study may enable us to discover the differences in the forces and causes that produce differences in educational systems.
11. **Global View:** The study enables us to appreciate educational

issues from global perspectives.

12. Humanitarian Ideals: The study helps us to enhance humanitarian ideals and practices.
13. Reliable Prediction: The study may enable us to give reliable prediction of the solutions to the problems prevalent.

### **Role of Area Studies and National Case Studies in Comparative Education**

#### ***The Systematic Area Studies Method Approach;***

This method was developed and popularized by G.Z.F. Beredy in his book "Comparative Method in Education "(1964). He used the interdisciplinary approach to systematically survey and analyzes education in different countries. The aim is to understand differences and similarities before borrowing and making any predictions. He argues that, since the study has to make sense out of similarities and differences among different educational systems, it is possible to seek assistance from other fields of study such as History, Sociology and Philosophy. In fact educational facts are so enmeshed in a matrix of other social sciences that comparative education cannot be studied in isolation. According to Beredy, the following steps are to be followed;

- I. Description of aspects of Education - This involves identification of the problem by clearly describing the problem from eye witness accounts, observations or even reading.
- II. Interpretation and explanation using the interdisciplinary approach - This involves giving explanation of the data collected, of the way things are in each country. Some of the reasons could be historical, social, cultural or religious.
- III. Juxtaposition or classification of data - This involves putting the information into groups in categories of contrasting and comparable features. In this way similarities and differences can be easily and clearly seen.
- IV. Comparison - This involves comparing features in one system with those of another system. This helps in the formulation of possible hypotheses.

- V. Conclusions and generalization - This involves testing of the hypotheses generated, drawing of valid conclusions and recommendations while focusing on the causes of similarities and differences.

#### ***Case Study Approach***

In this approach, an education, Comparativist from Pakistan can go to England to study the primary education Level of the country. His report (is believed) will be very comprehensive for his readers to understand. If it is possible for the researcher, he can take all the educational systems of the country and compare such educational system with his own educational system. The problem with this approach is that as a human being, the investigator may not be totally objective in his report.

#### **Issues and Concerns in Conducting Comparative and International Research**

A question that has to be addressed when researchers conduct cross-national research is how they can ensure that their research is rigorous. While all types of research involve pitfalls that researchers have to overcome in order to ensure that their studies produce reliable results, cross national research has its own unique pitfalls. The assumption here is that there would be a multi-national research team that is going to handle the research. This assumption would allow us to avoid some challenges that may be encountered when a cross-national comparative study is conducted by a single researcher or a team that lack understanding of the cultures of the countries being considered.

The basic assumption is that at least one person in the research team has experience with the cultural aspects of each country in order to facilitate the creation and execution of the research project in a proper way. Lim and Firkola recommend the existence of a multi-cultural research team in order to reduce the amount of cultural bias in cross-national comparative research. In addition they argue that when a member of a society is to be used to collect the data, then that would reduce the fear of the



respondents and allow access to data that might be inaccessible to foreigners. By adding this constraint to the scope of the discussion, issues that need to be addressed can be classified into two main categories.

The first category represents the issues and challenges that may affect the reliability and the quality of data being collected by different researchers from different countries. The second category represents challenges and issues related to all other parts of the research process that include specifying the research objective, selecting countries and selecting the analytical strategy.

#### ***Data collection and Methodological considerations***

The reliability and quality of data play significant roles in the success of any research project. Most researchers are familiar with the techniques that lead to reliable data when they select and design their research methods. However, collecting data from multiple countries for the purpose of comparative research may involve different types of challenges that may lead to unreliable data for comparison purposes if researchers fail to address and propose proper solutions to overcome these challenges. In this section, six issues and challenges that may affect the reliability of data for comparative research purposes are discussed. These issues include: Nonequivalence of key concepts, language of data collection, translation process, matching of samples, timing of data collection, and the comparability of the research process and instruments.

***Nonequivalence of key concepts:*** Researchers conducting cross-national comparative research must ensure that their questions have equivalent meaning among all respondents to guarantee that the variations in the data they collected is not a result of the respondents' varied interpretations of the questions.

***Language of data collection:*** In many cases, researchers conducting cross-national comparative research may face the challenge of collecting data from countries that speak different languages. The expectation here is that researchers would translate research

instruments to respondents' native languages when respondents are unfamiliar with other languages. However, there might be cases in which respondents or groups of the sampling frame are familiar with other languages. That would allow researchers to avoid the translation cost by collecting data using their native languages instead of those of the respondents.

**Translation process:** When data has to be collected from countries that speak different languages, translation of data and research instruments would be considered as one of the main tasks that researchers must handle properly. Birbili insists on the importance of considering the translation issues seriously as they have a direct impact on the quality of cross-national comparative research [. While the literature of comparative research contains effective guidelines for the appropriate translation of survey instruments, the applications of the rules from these guidelines is not easy in most cases. The quality of the translation process depends on the degree to which the equivalence of key concepts is achieved. Therefore, the task of cross-national researchers in translating instruments into another language is to achieve equivalence in meaning rather than in literal forms. In cases where the concept or the term cannot be translated exactly, researchers should avoid any attempt to have lexical equivalence and try to locate a term that meets the definition of that concept.

**Matching of Samples:** Another issue that the members of a research team must consider upon conducting cross-national comparative research is to identify how closely the samples should be matched for the comparability purposes. Cross-national comparative research has to maintain a high level of matching between respondents among the nations considered by the study.

**Timing of data:** Timing of data collection may affect the quality of data and consequently the comparability of data collected. This issue has to be considered especially when conducting studies that rely on data being collected from different countries at different time periods. This issue becomes more critical as the gap of time increases. "What if a project involves ten countries beginning with

data collected in the USA in 1992 and ending with data collected from Japan in 1997? Is it appropriate to include these data in a research study when there is such a long time span between the different countries? How much of a time lag is acceptable between samples?" questions Milliman.

***Comparability of research instruments:*** The last issue that has to be considered is the consistency among research instruments. It is possible that researchers find themselves dealing with inappropriate data for comparative purposes simply because they utilized different research instruments or processes for data collection. However, it might be difficult in some cases to maintain a high level of consistency between research methods especially when these methods are used to collect data from different countries. Researchers conducting cross-national comparative research have to realize that some methods of data collection may not work as well or be as appropriate in certain countries. For instance, surveys can be processed by mail in the USA, but in countries which require more personal connections, the survey may need to be handed out by and returned to the research group.

#### ***Managing Cross-National Comparative Research***

Knowledge in this field of study is based mostly on observations, expert opinions and experiences, previous practices and aggregate data. This creates the challenge of how to discover ways to utilize this wide range of sources in order to advance our knowledge of the field. Comparative research has the potential to help us achieve this goal if researchers become able to control and manage this type of research in a way that would allow the possibility of applying the operational knowledge to the different contextual conditions. At that point researchers will be able to develop generalizations that are useful to theory and application. Jreisat argues that the ability to describe and establish patterns as generalizations require an appropriate framework that is capable of dealing with various research challenges. The decision for the selection of an appropriate framework is not an isolated decision; it is connected to issues such as research objectives, unit of analysis,

type of contextual influences, and the familiarity with alternative comparative methods.

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