

## Book Reviews

### *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, by Robert Cowen and Andreas M. Kazamias (eds.). New York: Springer, 2009.

The *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, edited by Robert Cowen and Andreas M. Kazamias, is an editorial masterpiece, bringing together the central motifs in comparative education's past and possible directions for its future. The first line of the editorial introduction—"we are doing well . . . ?" (p. 3)—is both an oddity for such a "big project" (p. v) and quite revealing about the pages ahead. The editors invite readers to explore the histories of comparative education while simultaneously asking them to reflect on the present state of the field; but also, uneasily, the sentence lingers into an uncertain future with an unconventional ellipsis paired with a question mark to end this post-(post?) modern beginning. With this opening, the editors capture two of the underlying themes tying these volumes together: calling on scholars to effectuate a renewed historical scholarship in comparative education, and to unlearn and rethink some of the field's foundations.

The goal of the handbook "is not intended to freeze a field, to fix a cannon," the editors write in their conclusion, "but to rehearse and then release a field of study" (p. 1295). The editors accomplish this goal, positioning these volumes to guide, or at least inform, a particular direction for the future of the field. The editors are not shy in their convictions or style in describing that desired trajectory, either. On the one hand, the volumes consistently make the case for a revival of "Promethean Humanism" in the field, while, on the other hand, ask readers to rethink certain aspects and definitions in comparative education. The editors' fingerprints are clearly, and enjoyably, found throughout in their opening commentaries to each section (but surprisingly not the last), their combined nine authored chapters, and their careful selection of some seventy chapters.

The volumes are broken into eight sections, each carefully assembled individually, but when combined construct a diverse narrative aimed at answering the editors' overarching questions: "What kind of concerns and what kind of academic work is being, and has been done in 'the field of study' called comparative education—primarily from a university base? Where are we? And where are we going?" (p. 4). The organization of the volumes follows this same trajectory—past, present, future—and the reader experiences many comparative educations along the way,

from the historical to the political, and from the modern to the poststructuralist.

The first section of the book, “the creation and re-creation of a field,” takes the reader through the many epistemological paradigms within comparative education’s history from the “nearly scientific” studies of Julien, to the administrative melioristic practical applications of Mann, to the historical-philosophical genre of Sadler, and to the scientific positivism of Noah. Having seen how at various times the field was socially constructed in different ways to understand its past, the reader is left reflecting on the “historical amnesia” of comparative education (Larsen quoted in Kazamias, p. 156).

The next section, “political formations and educational system,” travels the globe to uncover how within various state contexts, comparative education is constructed differently. The main unit of analysis, like much of comparative education scholarship, is the nation-state. What ties these chapters together, however, is not the authors’ use of the nation-state unit of analysis. That would be too easy for the editors. Instead, the articles are linked by the consistent call to embrace uncertainty: “unpredictable” educational dynamics in the British empire (McCulloch, p. 169); problematizing “the coherent and consistent process . . . [of] the colonial scenario” in African colonies (Madeira, p. 182); claiming “the future is uncertain” for education in Spain (Luzón & Torres, p. 234); and the “multiple outcomes” of postsocialist education transformations in the former Soviet Union (Silova, p. 297). The main point in this section is that local politics are often messy and unpredictable, leaving educational practices around the world more diverse than similar. The reader is left with an uneasy feeling that comparative education is not as straightforward as some contemporary theories have described.

Expanding the scope of analysis, Section 3, titled “the national, the international, and the global,” complicates the many comparative educations of Section 2 by addressing the uneasy relationship in and between our field’s conceptualization of these three units. The main focus is on educational transfer across both time and space. It is, as Beech (p. 341) describes, comparative education’s *raison d’être*. The editors clearly agree. Unlike in Section 2, these chapters focus not on a single country or geographic location, but rather on theoretical issues related to the understanding of the global as well as an exploration of the actors within this space. Theoretical articles focus on problematizing the spatial and temporal conceptualizations of educational transfer (Sobe & Fischer); exploring how the objects of schooling are administered through notions of cosmopolitanism (Popkewitz); and the Foucauldian notion of Panopticon to untangle European Union discourses since 1992 (Pasiás & Roussakis).

The actors working inside this global space receive both praise and critique. Most notably, the chapter by Rizvi and Lingard detailing the many shifts in educational policy by OECD since its creation ends by explaining how the current ideological framework of the global organization is more focused on “economic efficiency than issues of social and cultural formations” (p. 452), a recurring theme throughout the first volume. The chapter by De Moura Castro, a former World Bank staff member,

is a carefully edited defense of the multilateral banks' efforts in education. This juxtaposition reinforces the central ideas of both the section—the contested and complicated relationship among the national, international, and global—and of the volumes; there are many comparative educations literally existing side by side.

After focusing on the comparative educations within nation-states and the contested space of international and global education, Section 4 explores the two dominant ideas of industrialization and knowledge economies in educational thinking in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. As the debate about these two ideas unfolds in and between the chapters, it becomes evident that our imaginations of future educations have been limited by what Cowen calls “deductive rationalities” (p. 501); or the need to derive an education system based entirely on a desired economic future. The cases of Argentina and Brazil's transition to knowledge economies (Ferreira); France, England, and the United States's social stratification through education during industrialization (Carl); the strategically useful and flexible rhetoric on the European area of higher education and its shift toward differentiation (Weymans); the global south's attempt to “leapfrog directly into a modern knowledge economy” (Welch, p. 587); and the renewed call for using human capital theories to support education and economic development (Karatzia-Stavlioti & Lambropoulos)—all advance a similar, yet contextualized, narrative: the educational discourse since the nineteenth century has privileged certain ideas (education for homo economicus) and has arguably remained stagnant, yet couched in new rhetoric, in the twenty-first century.

The section beginning Volume 2, “Postcolonialism,” launches the reader into a current yet underresearched direction of the field. The editors note this section exemplifies “some of the important new concerns and visions of comparative education” (p. 6). Edited by Elaine Unterhalter, Section 5 explores how the world and thinking in comparative education has recently changed in exciting new ways, particularly within former colonial localities. This section is most notable for its diverse range of article structures (from personal narratives to traditional academic papers) and positions (from historical perspectives of nations undergoing transformations in a postcolonial time to identity formation as a result of vast societal changes). Taken together, the section is true to the capricious postcolonial paradigm and has “no orthodoxies regarding epistemologies and methodology” (Unterhalter, p. 653). The first chapter in this section is in stark contrast to the last chapter in Volume 1. Whereas Karatzia-Stavlioti and Lambropoulos reaffirmed the predictable, neat human capital theory in education, the first chapter in Volume 2 suggests, “post-colonial approaches to education have an emphasis on exploring complexity, dissent and hybrid strands of the learner's experiences” (Sharma-Brymer, p. 656). Complexity, dissent, and hybridity require historical understanding as well as an ability to embrace new ways of thinking—both central messages of these volumes—and directly counter to human capital and modernist thinking that has “trapped” comparative education for decades.

Another current research direction in comparative education the editors hope to see continue in the future is presented in Section 6. Titled “Cultures, Knowledge

and Pedagogies,” the chapters within this section explore the social construction of “the educated person” and present future possibilities of study. The editors see this research direction as undergoing a transition (or what Cowen calls a “transitology”) and revitalization because of “academics such as Basil Bernstein and Tom Popkewitz, feminists and advocates of positional identity (such as American blacks), and some curriculum specialists” (p. 6) who are currently conducting research on identity in new directions. The editors continue, suggesting this topic “is thus changing rapidly and a comparative education of the future must work out new ways to analyse the theme of identity” (p. 6). Various country studies around the changing meaning of identity construction and schooling are presented and then pulled together in two of the volumes’ best chapters. Robin Alexander asks researchers in comparative education to become masters of both the study of “education elsewhere [and] with the study of teaching and learning” (p. 924), filling the noticeable gap in comparative education on the study of the processes of learning and identity. Andy Hargreaves takes the message a step further and sums up the editors’ intent of the volumes thus far: “The last two decades have been dominated by Anglo-Saxon strategies of ruthless, measurement-driven improvement and intervention that have incurred only widespread poverty and inequity and other social waste. It is now time for other more sustainable sensibilities to take their place” (p. 957).

The editors pull together a few of these new “sensibilities” in Section 7, “New Thinking.” Particularly, the editors ask the field of comparative education to transcend the “modernist trap,” or the field’s reliance on classical forms of descriptive analyses, limited in time, and generally aimed for educational policy, in hopes of opening new possibilities, new ways of thinking. The biggest and most well-known names in the field appear in this section: Paulston, Apple, Stromquist, Larsen, Dale, Robertson, McLaughlin, Phillips, Gundara, and of course Kazamias and Cowen. Collectively, these chapters try to get “past the post” by focusing on critical pedagogy; postmodernity and historical research; feminism; educational transfer; and even mapping comparative education in a post-postmodern world. This section pushes readers to question long-held beliefs such as using the nation-state as the main unit of analysis in comparative education and confronting certain space-time patterns. We are asked to challenge “the barriers that limit wider debate and dialogue . . . [by] adopting the pluralistic stance, multi-interpretive strategies and general incredulity towards totalising meta-narratives that postmodernism brings to the social scientific tradition” (Larsen, p. 1056).

The last section of Volume 2 is titled “the cutting edge—questioning the future” and brings together both established and new scholars alike in the ellipsis and question mark that began the volumes. The chapters are exciting and fresh, or what Patricia Broadfoot calls “the current buoyancy of the field of comparative education—testimony to its intellectual energy, its theoretical reach and its considerable diversity” (p. 1249). The chapters discuss ideas such as the increased frequency of digital technology and its effects on education both methodologically and conceptually as well as practically (Brown); a reimagining of the positivist approaches to comparative education through the privileging of context (Crossley), or

what Sonia Mehta calls “multilogue”: the combination of social cartography with critical discourse analysis to reinscribe “all big stories into a space, or field, of little stories” (Mehta, p. 1194). These chapters set the “stage . . . for the performance of a new dramaturgical act in the multifaceted protean episteme of comparative education” (Kazamias, p. 1275). In other words, the future of comparative education will question some of the field’s foundations by encouraging and supporting a shifting knowledge of science.

These volumes reveal a rich and hopeful future for comparative education. The editors present the field of comparative education like a kaleidoscope of uncertainty: historically, various arrangements of colors dominate our shared view, but as each generation of scholars read the global, crystals change into new patterns that excite and push the field in new directions. Cowen and Kazamias show this to be the case in the history of comparative education, and suggest we are now at a moment of transition; the field is currently within a transitology, and we are asked to embrace the current change, whatever that may look like and wherever that may take us.

The Handbook begins to lay new foundations for reimagining comparative education that is more theoretically and epistemologically open. It is admittedly neither comprehensive nor complete, but is ultimately a clearly articulated vision. Yet, I fear these volumes will go unread by most comparative educationalists. Competing with the increasingly limited time of professors who must “publish or perish” in the ruthless world of academia, the sheer length of these volumes (almost 1,300 pages) suggests there is but a small chance they will be read in their entirety. Although the editorial feat will be discussed and praised in certain circles and many exceptional chapters will be widely read and debated on their own merits, the real beauty of the volumes will be missed. The diverse voices, opinions, and arguments found within these volumes combine in ways that only a cover-to-cover reading illuminates. It is ultimately an exciting and hopeful reading of the field and its future that new generations of comparative education scholars would appreciate. The editors suggest “we know our old answers about ourselves, as a field of study” (p. 1296). We are doing well, the editors believe. But what are comparative education’s future claims? This is for us to decide.

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***A Chance for European Universities, Or:  
Avoiding the Looming University Crisis in Europe,***  
by Jo Ritzen. Amsterdam: University Press, 2010.

Although university league tables and other national ranking mechanisms have been a feature of European higher education for many years, the introduction of the first global rankings of higher education institutions—Shanghai Jiaotong University’s Higher Education Institute’s 2003 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)—signaled a new era of global competition and comparison. The ARWU

rankings, initially created as a mechanism for Chinese universities to compare their progress toward achieving “world-class” status, have subsequently become a key reference point for institutions around the world. Despite concerns regarding ARWU’s measures, which concentrate on research and favor the sciences and English-language publications, higher education institutions around the globe are nevertheless clamoring to reach the top of a list dominated by universities in the United States. Given that few European universities (mainly those in the United Kingdom) are positioned in the top fifty of the ARWU list, the rankings have created considerable consternation regarding the position of European universities relative to institutions from other regions. When combined with the limited prevalence of European universities (outside of the United Kingdom) on the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings that first emerged in 2004, the prowess and import of European universities have thus been called into question.

As a response to the increasingly competitive nature of the global higher education sector and particular European context, *A Chance for European Universities* presents a rallying cry for higher education policymakers, administrators, and academics across Europe to avoid the region’s “marginalization” in today’s globalized world. In this comprehensive volume packed with comparative statistics, Jo Ritzen, former Dutch minister of education, culture, and science, former World Bank vice-president, and current president of Maastricht University, goes beyond an analysis of the current state of affairs. He provides a compelling “plea,” which he acknowledges in the preface is political and subjective, aimed at encouraging European universities to make a concerted effort to maximize their strengths and increase their global stature to avoid an impending “crisis.” Ritzen argues that reforms are needed for several reasons, specifically in response to demographic changes that have resulted in fewer higher education students, “rigid” national higher education structures that inhibit cross-national coordination, declining public funding for higher education, and the bureaucratic nature of European universities.

Ritzen calls for a radical restructuring or “reinventing” of European higher education, including emphasizing a regional “denationalized” accreditation and quality control system, innovating the higher education sector, and developing private funding to support public institutions that have undergone austerity measures in recent years. Ritzen also calls upon European universities to leave the “ivory tower” mentality behind and embrace science-based innovation for economic development. He argues that universities in Europe are underexploited for their economic growth potential, and that tapping into the human resources of immigrant communities through equality of opportunity is vital to a Europe in demographic decline with an aging population and limited supply of university-age students. Moreover, he contends that universities in Europe must be “cosmopolitan” and transcend national boundaries to train students who will be entering the international labor market.

*A Chance for European Universities* provides extensive statistical data that compares trends in various European countries with the rest of the world. The wide range of indices covered includes granted patents, the Global Competitiveness Index, research expenditures, student mobility, and public finance of higher educa-

tion. Throughout the book, Ritzen returns to the concepts of competitiveness and international rankings introduced in the first two chapters. In his detailed analysis of the impact of global university rankings, he argues that European universities must innovate in order to attract some of the estimated 4.5 million students who will be studying outside their home countries by 2020. As he correctly points out, university rankings such as ARWU and THE measure not only quality based on specific measures (related to research in particular), they also represent the perception of quality, which may influence international students' and scholars' views of higher education institutions. To improve European universities' performance on various quality indexes, Ritzen seeks to create "a European system which is truly attractive for students from all over the world standing as a symbol for a Europe of imagination, creativity, knowledge, and social cohesion" (p. 29). His overarching argument is that the "renaissance" of European higher education must be led by autonomous, innovative, "professional" universities that are infused with substantial private funding from "philanthropy, alumni, commercial education, income from valorization of university-industry relations, etc." (p. 152). His proposals strive to reclaim the eminence of European universities on the world stage.

Ritzen's call-to-action has been heard, at least by some. In fact, the book's publication was preceded by an online discussion period in which interested parties made comments on a draft that Ritzen incorporated into the final published text. Moreover, after the book was published, European higher education and business leaders met at a June 2010 conference in Brussels to discuss the way forward. The conference resulted in a manifesto, "Empowering European Universities," which was signed by the twenty higher education leaders who attended the conference. Like the book, the manifesto calls on European government officials and the higher education community to reform universities to capitalize on their strengths in the global higher education marketplace to contribute to European prosperity. The manifesto "pleads for urgent action" to increase mission differentiation within a "world-class" European higher education system, develop universities' potential in innovative teaching and learning through professional management, and internationalize universities to train students for "globalized leadership." The European higher education community, which is accustomed to a long history of public higher education institutions, is less receptive to Ritzen's message. Concerns regarding privatization and the purpose of higher education in Europe abound. Though European universities have been experiencing restructuring and reforms related to the "new public management" for many years and some countries have introduced fees for the first time or substantially increased tuition fees, the wide-ranging impact of the manifesto and Ritzen's book on the European higher education sector remain to be seen. Moreover, although Ritzen's charge may find its way into regional initiatives such as the Europe 2020 strategy, individual member states still govern their internal affairs to a larger degree, including higher education.

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***Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems***, by P. Oberhuemer, I. Schreyer, and M. Neuman. Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2010.

It is recognized that early childhood education can lay the foundations for later educational success, especially for those from underprivileged backgrounds. There has been an increasing focus on this sector at the European level in recent years. Early childhood education is the education and care systems for children below the compulsory school age in European countries (whereas it can range from birth to eight in most states in the United States). Even though the compulsory age varies in different countries, the twenty-seven members of European Union (EU) are cooperating to develop common preprimary or preschool provision. Similarly, EU states and the Commission have worked closely to support reforms of education and training systems because the quality of education and care relies heavily on the qualifications of teachers/caregivers. Pamela Oberhuemer, Inge Schreyer, and Michelle Neuman bring attention to these European dimensions of the early childhood education community with their book, *Professionals in Early Childhood Education and Care Systems: European Profiles and Perspectives*.

The authors present twenty-seven detailed profiles of early childhood professionals in each EU member country, highlighting the specific cultural and social context undergirding each system of education and care. They then examine critical issues cross-culturally regarding early childhood professionals in the EU community, and discuss the historical and social contexts and changes in the early childhood workforce. They conclude with a focus on transatlantic learning: comparing early childhood professionals in the United States and the EU. The early childhood education and care systems in the U.S., while very similar to the conditions in the EU, differ from state to state because they are decentralized. The issues that EU members encounter thus far are also experienced in the U.S.

Among the many issues Oberhuemer et al. bring to the table for discussion, the qualifications of early childhood professionals deserves the most immediate attention. These qualifications, particularly pertaining to the required degree(s) of early childhood professionals, have always been debated. There is no easy answer to who is most qualified to teach and care for young children. However, as some recent research suggests, the education levels of preschool teachers, as well as their specialized training in early childhood and child development, directly links to the positive learning and development of children. The authors' focus on this issue could not be more appropriate. Because the requirements for early childhood professionals vary greatly across the EU community (this is also a concern in the U.S.), this area needs much attention if EU members want to collaborate to develop a protocol that is both universal and culturally responsive. Another major issue noted here is staff/child ratios. Although the European Commission Network



on Childcare set up guidelines in 1996, many of the targets related to staff/child ratios were not met. For example, the staff/child ratios for 0–3 in center-based settings vary significantly: they range from 1:3.2 in Denmark to 1:8 (infants) or 1: 20 (two- to three-year-olds) in Spain. The staff/child ratios for three- to six-year-olds in center-based settings range from 1:5.9 (in Denmark) to 1:25.5 (in France). Oberhuember et al. also address issues related to professional development, status, and pay, as these targets were also unachieved. Together, these issues remind us of the importance of the early childhood profession and children’s early learning experience. More importantly, the authors invite us to ponder the ways to provide European early childhood professionals needed societal benefits, recognition, and monetary rewards.

It is not the authors’ intention to provide specific directions for policymakers who decide on the minimum requirements for teacher qualifications in the early childhood education and care programs in EU (and in U.S. as well). However, they raise issues for scholars, community members, and policymakers to think about. Among the most important of these points: how to best prepare teachers and caregivers to work with young children in their specific cultural, social, linguistic, and political contexts. Again we are reminded that all these efforts take time, as some of the newly joined EU members are going through political and social reforms. As more EU countries require a B.A./B.S. as the entry requirement for preprimary education, followed by professional education and extensive field experiences, reaching the goal of recruiting and retaining high-quality early child professionals to provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum may not be too distant.

This timely collection constitutes essential reading for the early childhood education community. The comprehensive text may primarily be used for reference on the basis of individual chapters, this is a well-crafted book that details information about early childhood education across the EU community. We have learned how the early childhood education and care system in each EU country started and where it is heading, as well as gained cross-national insights on this topic.

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