



Chapter 12

Comparative and International Education as Fields of Scholarship in South Africa and Japan and the Scope for Collaboration Between the Two Countries

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12.1 Introduction

The study of the internationalisation of higher education, and therefore of partnership between universities of any two countries, falls squarely within the scholarly field of Comparative and International Education. Moreover, in a project of partnership between universities from two countries, scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education can both add and gain significant value. It is therefore apt that the final chapter in this volume investigates the scope for collaboration between Japanese and South African scholars of Comparative and International Education.

The chapter commences with a survey of the evolution and current state of Comparative and International Education at universities worldwide. This will form the framework for the next two sections, when the evolution and current state of Comparative and International Education in South Africa and Japan respectively will be the subject of investigation. These surveys will then be the basis for reflection on the scope for collaboration between scholars of Comparative and International Education in Japan and South Africa in the final section of the chapter. What transpired from the chapters of this book in terms of scope and caveats for collaboration between Japanese and South African universities will be summarised in the concluding part of the chapter and the role for scholars of Comparative and International Education in these two countries to guide the process of collaboration will be emphasised.

12.2 Comparative and International Education: A Field of Scholarship and Its Position at Universities Worldwide

This section commences with a conceptual clarification of the term 'Comparative and International Education', followed by a brief outline of the historical evolution of the field. Its position at universities worldwide is then discussed, and the purposes or significance of the field is highlighted in the final part of the section.

A wide and divergent assortment of the definition of Comparative and International Education is abound in the scholarly literature. For the purposes of this chapter, the following conceptual clarification of Wolhuter (2021) will be used as a working definition. Comparative Education is a three-in-one perspective on education. These three perspectives are:

1. An education *system* perspective: While it is not inconceivable that a single education institution can be the focus of a Comparative Education study, such an

- institution will always be placed and studied within the education system in which it functions,
2. A contextual perspective: Education systems are studied within the societal contexts in which these systems are embedded. This perspective entails both the study of contextual factors as shaping forces of education systems and, conversely, the effects that education systems have on society, and
 3. A comparative perspective: Various education systems, within their societal embeddedness, are compared.

In view of trends in both the worlds of scholarship and education, such as globalisation, a belief has developed in recent times that the name of the field should change to Comparative and International Education. The term 'International Education' has a long history, with many meanings attached to it. In this chapter, 'International Education' is used as explained by Phillips & Schweisfurth (2014:60), namely that International Education refers to scholarship studying education through a lens bringing a global or an international perspective.

Comparative and International Education has had a long historical evolution. The beginnings of the field can be traced back to two pre-scientific phases. These were a phase of casual travellers' tales on foreign education practices, reaching back to times immemorial, and a second phase since the nineteenth century, when governments of newly formed nation-states assigned officials to conduct systematic, comprehensive studies of foreign education systems, with the aim to borrow best practices to improve the domestic education project.

A third phase was launched by Marc-Antoine Jullien in an 1816-1817 publication in which he pleaded for the collection of information of all education systems in the world to improve the fate of humanity. A regression set in the next phase, reaching its zenith in the inter-war decades of the twentieth century, when the attention of scholars was fixed on national education systems, studying each national system as an expression of the national character of each nation.

Then in the fifth phase, breaking through after World War II and reaching its high water mark in the 1960s, scholars attempted to turn Comparative Education into a fully-fledged social science. There was an unlimited belief in the societal elevating power of education, and on a world scale, in education as the major instrument to modernise the developing nations of the world. The optimism of the 1960s turned into pessimism in the 1970s, when in a sixth phase attention turned to the effect that power relations in society had on education. Then, in a seventh phase in the 1990s, postmodernism became fashionable in the field, and a plethora of paradigms made its entry into the field.

What is salient in the field today is the analyses and use of league tables from international test series (especially the International Programme of Student Assessment) PISA tests. Other noteworthy features in the field are the effect of neo-liberal economics, the Creed of Human Rights and Education and the issue of Social Justice.

Regarding its position at universities, Comparative and International Education has had a roller coaster ride over the past 120 years, since its first appearance at the Teachers College at the University of Columbia. Furthermore, today its appearance at universities shows a chequered picture. What is helpful to clarify its position at universities is the three phases distinguished by Larsen, Majhanovich and Maseman (2007) in the development of the field at Canadian universities. The first phase is the establishment of Comparative Education chairs, departments, posts and programmes. The second phase is the disintegration of Comparative Education where the infrastructure built up in the first phase. The final phase is the broadening of Comparative Education where the field returns, not in the form of stand-alone courses, but is subsumed in courses such as globalisation and education, education and development and education and human rights. These three phases of the field's presence at universities are notable at different parts of the world.

Similar to the definitions and thematic scope of the field, its purposes (or at least proclaimed use) are in a constant state of expansion (see Wolhuter 2012). The conventional list of aims or points of significance of Comparative and International Education put forward by scholars in the field relates to satisfying the human need for knowledge (describing education systems), explaining education systems (from the contextual forces giving rise to the kaleidoscope of education systems around the world), improving education systems (identifying and borrowing or learning from best ideas, policies and practices to improve the domestic education project), assessing education systems, serving other fields of education scholarship and the philanthropic ideal (improving or ameliorating the condition of humanity or lives of people).

But every study as to why it appears in programmes or what motivates students to study the field yields yet a new aim, purpose or use of the field (see Wolhuter 2012). Some other reasons for studying Comparative and International Education include students' need to understand their own education system, to find work in a foreign country or education system, to understand foreign cultures, to understand nascent regional education systems (for example, the reason Comparative and International Education students in Greece cited for studying the field was to understand the new European integrated education system, of which they were destined to form part) and for international students to understand the exigencies of university study in their host country (the reason for the inclusion of a Comparative Education course in a master's programme of educational leadership for international students at a Canadian University) (see Wolhuter 2012).

To summarise the above, while the field of Comparative and International Education has an impressive list of purposes or selling points, there are perpetual attempts to downscale its presence at universities.

12.3 Comparative and International Education at Universities in South Africa

As elsewhere in the world, the historical trajectory and present state of Comparative and International Education at universities in South Africa can only be understood within the societal and education context, particularly the higher education context. These have been explained in detail in Chapter 2, and only salient points impacting Comparative and International Education will be highlighted here.

South Africa is located at the southern tip of Africa. While the country is enveloped by neighbouring African nations, South Africa is situated far from the (economic, political and scholarly) hub of the contemporary world, namely Western Europe and North America, with the emerging second hub of Eastern Asia. The country has a young population profile. South Africa is still in the throes of a major exercise of sociopolitical reconstruction, which commenced in 1994. This project has included the drafting of a new Constitution, putting in place a Constitutional Democracy, buttressed by a Bill of Human Rights. The major challenges facing the country include rife inequality, unemployment and an extant lack of social capital (evident in high incidences of problems such as crime, vandalism, aggression and reckless driving of motor cars). According to some estimates, 75% of South African youth are unemployed (Flanagan 2021).

Formal education commenced in South Africa rather late in 1652, after the Dutch East Indian Company established a refreshment station where Cape Town is today. Education developed slowly and was segregated along racial lines, with White South African children enjoying schools much better than that of Black South African children. One of the aims of the post-1994 sociopolitical reconstruction of the country has been to transform education, to build a new education system characterised by equal education opportunities, education for all, high-quality education and multicultural education. However, on all counts, well-nigh thirty years after 1994, the

education system of South Africa still falls short of these lofty ideals—and by a long stretch at that.

Higher education commenced even later. The rudiments of a university appeared only in the second half of the nineteenth century, while fully-fledged universities were established only in the twentieth century. Universities also developed along segregated lines. Furthermore, by 1994, the gross higher education enrolment ratio stood at 14%. Not only was the aggregate gross higher education enrolment ratio low for an upper-middle income country, but participation rates were very unequal: gross enrolment ratios for Whites were significantly higher than those of Blacks. The university sector was adversely affected by the international academic boycott, which was waged against South Africa, c1960–1990.

Thus in 1994, the main challenges regarding the university sector included reintegration into the international fold, expanding and equalising access and desegregation. Since 1994, enrolments have grown spectacularly. Much equalisation has taken place, although the composition of the student body is still not an accurate reflection of South Africa's population profile. Further to the problem of physical access to higher education, there is also the question of epistemic and financial access, which have not been completely and permanently addressed. Internationalisation gained good momentum on many counts and South African higher education became well integrated into the global higher education project soon after 1994. Judged by campus unrest, which continues to plague university campuses sporadically, the question of the decolonisation of academe has not been settled.

Comparative Education secured a foothold at South African universities during the 1960s (Bergh & Soudien 2006). It gained its strongest prominence at the historically White Afrikaans and historically Black universities, but never enjoyed a strong presence at the historically White English universities. At the historically White Afrikaans and historically Black universities, it became very established, not only in standalone undergraduate and graduate education courses, but it also

had a very strong institutional infrastructure (in terms of Departments of Comparative Education and staff exclusively specialising in Comparative Education), as strong as in very few other universities in the world (see Wolhuter 1994). Unfortunately, almost as soon as the teaching of Comparative Education started, it was affected by the academic boycott which hit the country as from c1960. The field was taught in the interwar “factors and forces” mould, where mention was made of the ideas of 1960s scholars, namely Bereday, King, Noah and Eckstein. Even the ideas of these scholars did not percolate through to the content of courses (apart from mentioning their names and main ideas), nor did they inform research. But what is more serious, is that the field got totally isolated from international developments as from the early 1970s. Progressive scholarship in South Africa and beyond, then and now, accuse the teachers and courses of Comparative Education of serving as an intellectual justification for the government of the day’s segregation education policies.

Unfortunately, when South Africa finally did join the international mainstream again, by the end of the century after the sociopolitical change of 1994, Comparative Education fell victim to the educational and teacher educational reforms which followed the 1994 political change. As part of the 1994 overhaul of education, the radical change was made to switch from content-based education (deemed to be too authoritarian, stifling the cognitive development of students) to outcomes-based, or competency-based, education. In line with this change, the requirements of initial teacher education programmes were altered too. Initial teacher education programmes would be informed by a set of competencies or roles a teacher had to perform, and the disciplines of Education, such as Philosophy of Education, History of Education and Comparative Education, had to make way. What remained was that Comparative Education figured in undergraduate and postgraduate education programmes, not as stand-alone courses, but subsumed in courses such as ‘Globalisation and Education’, ‘Education and Human Rights’, ‘Education and Development’ and the like.

The first problem is that in such a situation, Comparative and International Education “flows a mile wide, but an inch deep” as one of the leaders in the field, Vandra Masemann (2008) once remarked. Students never become acquainted with the scope, theoretical frame(s) and methodological bases of the field. This had a devastating effect on the place of Comparative and International Education at South African universities. Further to that, Comparative Education as a stand-alone course virtually disappeared from initial teacher education programmes and remained only in isolated cases in postgraduate Education programmes.

Then, on 19 February 2015, the Minister of Higher Education and Training issued the Revised Policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (RSA 2015). This latest policy statement stipulated that 50% of teacher education programmes credits should be courses in the phase or subject area specialisation of the student, and 40% of credits should be in Foundations of Education (such as History of Education, Philosophy of Education and Sociology of Education), general pedagogy (instructional science) and situational learning (learning in specific situations, such as classrooms, schools and in the community). The remaining 10% is left to the judgment of the particular teacher education institution. This development boded well for a resuscitation of the field in stand-alone courses, at undergraduate and graduate education courses at South African universities.

However, almost six years down the line, little is visible in restoring the field to its once glorious position at South African universities. The number of universities with stand-alone Comparative and International Education courses as part of their initial teacher education programmes stands at no more than five, while at the postgraduate level, the position of the field is no stronger. One noteworthy development is that the University of South Africa (UNISA) (a distance education university, also the largest university in South Africa) has re-introduced a module combining the History of Education and Comparative and International Education at the postgraduate level. In terms of infrastructure, no Department

of Comparative Education has re-appeared (though this also has to do with the general restructuring of the South African universities over the past few decades, doing away with Departments as units and creating larger Schools); neither has Chairs or Faculty posts exclusively allocated to Comparative and International Education re-surfaced.

Organisationally, the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES) was established in 1991 in Katberg, South Africa. From its 35 founding members, membership has quickly grown to about 300, around which it has now been standing for many years (see Wolhuter & Nyatuka 2022). SACHES was admitted to the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in 1994 and hosted the Comparative Education World Conference in 1998 in Cape Town. SACHES has been organising an annual conference since its inception and also has its own peer-reviewed journal, *Southern African Review of Education*. However, in terms of book production, the organisation has been lacking.

12.4 Comparative and International Education at Universities in Japan

As discussed earlier in this chapter, one can find the origin of Comparative Education in the casual writings of travellers who visited other countries. Later, as the nation-states emerged in Europe, there were systematic efforts by government officials to learn from the educational practices and systems elsewhere, either to improve the domestic system or to identify its comparative strengths. In Japan, similar records on foreign education exist in its history. There are many writings by Japanese who travelled overseas since the seventh century or even earlier. Some travellers were dispatched officially by the authorities of the time to borrow ideas and models from advanced societies, and others were castaways from wrecked boats or merchants who had a chance to stay overseas and return home. However, for the 250 years before the fall apart of the Edo feudal government in the mid-nineteenth century,

Japanese contacts with foreign cultures were extremely limited. The national border was closed, and foreigners coming from and Japanese going overseas were prohibited except for a couple of designated locations.

The establishment of the modern national government in 1868 changed the long introvert nature of Japanese society. As the threat of colonisation by the Western powers loomed, the government rushed to modernise various aspects of Japanese governance and economic and social structures to protect itself and catch up with the West. The national and regional governments sent many competent young people to study in Europe and America. For example, in 1871 alone, 174 people were sent to study abroad. The top destination was the United States of America (USA) (44%), followed by the United Kingdom (UK) (28%) and France (14%) (Ogata 1961:23-26). The Japanese government invited many experts from these countries to transfer modern knowledge and technology to newly established schools for advanced learning. Eventually, these foreign expert teachers were replaced by Japanese who studied abroad, translated many books and introduced foreign systems to fit Japanese soil. Considering there was no international financial aid mechanism such as the loans provided by the World Bank, it amazing to see the Japanese have accomplished all these in a few decades with their own means. These schools established for advanced learning developed later into universities, with seven imperial universities in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Tohoku, Kyushu and Hokkaido at the top.

As this history shows, the initial form of foreign educational studies was motivated to borrow ideas from the modernised West. Later, with Japan's fast catch-up and military competition against the West, the interest in neighbouring Asian countries has taken shape as the potential objects of colonisation. Therefore, in the early twentieth century, various ministries and offices commissioned research on societies and people of these countries while looking up the models of colonial education from other colonial powers (Ozawa 1981:68-69). Foreign educational studies that

contributed to Japanese colonialism are controversial but cannot be overlooked. Similar to the Western universities at which the institutional foundations of foreign educational studies were developed during the colonial period, Japanese Comparative Education, which flourished after World War II, has its roots in this period.

The first university programme under the name of 'Comparative Education' was established in Kyushu University in 1952, followed by Hiroshima University (1953), Kyoto University (1965) and Tokyo University (1967). These are imperial and national research universities. As will be discussed later, the institutional settings of these strongholds of Comparative Education characterised mainstream practices of Japanese Comparative Education, at least in its early days. That is to focus more on the studies of education systems and policies in other countries and conduct macro-level comparisons rather than being practical.

Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES) was established in 1965, making it one of the oldest Comparative Education societies and a founding member of the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). At the first meeting held in Hiroshima in 1965, membership was 95. Membership increased steadily from 408 in 1980 and 601 in 1990 to 1,153 in 2010, although there has been a slight decrease in recent years (977 in 2017) (Ozawa 1981:74 and information provided by JCES secretariat).

In the following section, we discuss the research trends of Japanese Comparative Education based on the analysis of the articles published in JCES journal, *Comparative Education* (hereafter CE-J to differentiate from the *Comparative Education* journal published in the UK) since the first volume published in 1975 to vol. 59 in 2019. Similar to many other journals, CE-J publishes both peer-reviewed and invited articles. While papers in the former category are self-directed works by individual scholars, the latter constitute special issues whose themes are decided by the editorial board and reflect the collective interests of JCES. Because of the interest of this

chapter to trace the epistemological trend, we will focus on patterns found in the latter category – invited articles.

12.4.1 Japanese Comparative Education Epistemologies and Its Divergence From English Discourse

Throughout different time periods, the theme of ‘research trend’ arose from time to time, particularly among invited papers that constitute special issues.

In the inaugural volume of CE-J in 1975, leading scholars of the time expressed their views about what Comparative Education should be. Michiya Niibori (1975:18) argued that the comparison for Comparative Education should be different from foreign case studies in other educational research and that the rigorous and systematic methodology would identify the foreign studies as Comparative Education. Niibori’s argument echoes the drives for methodological elaboration in contemporary English literature (Noah & Eckstein 1969; Holmes 1972). Also, Susumu Ikeda (1975:7-9) considered that the act of comparison itself is a mere process for a comprehensive understanding of education in a particular society and that Comparative Education has its prospect in the synthesis at the crossroads of philosophical, historical, social and global perspectives.

Ikeda’s orientation towards comprehensive analysis seems to match the call in the anglophone circle for analysis of education in its ecology (Koehl 1977). In fact, this argument has been the major backbone of Japanese Comparative Education, being reconfirmed by many influential scholars throughout its history. The divergence between English and Japanese academic discourses would have been how such a desire for comprehensive analysis was translated into actual research practices and then abstracted back to the epistemological discourse.

In contrast to English publications that could be classified into different theoretical groups such as positivism, phenomenism, structuralism or humanism, such classification by -ism and theories seems to be hard for

Japanese publications. Certainly, the necessity of theorisation has been raised many times in invited articles. Some voices claimed that comparative studies have to be designed to better understand Japan's educational issues and provide information for Japanese policymakers (Ichikawa 1990:7). Still, a large part of the effort towards methodological sophistication was directed at deepening the contextual understanding instead of adopting abstract theories or drawing lessons by finding patterns. It is said that a truly good work of area studies does not cut off one or two aspects of educational practices based on agendas brought from the outside. Repeated fieldwork is required so that the theories emerge from a contextual understanding of educational issues (Otsuka 2009:45-50). It is symbolic to see that there was a special issue titled, "Frontier of Area Studies of Education" in 2001 (volume 27), which was meant to follow up on a series of special issues on epistemologies in the 1990s (Ehara 2001:4).

One of the causes of such Japanese divergence from English discourse is the difference in institutional conditions. As some scholars have pointed out, Japanese Comparative Education has identified itself in the domains that do not compete with but complement neighbouring fields such as educational administration, educational sociology or educational philosophy (Ogawa 2013). Since the first Comparative Education programme was established in Kyushu University in 1952, major programmes that train young scholars to accumulate research work in this field have concentrated on imperial and key national universities, with some significant exceptions outside of this category. Kondo (2013) points out that imperial universities' research-oriented nature contributed to Japanese Comparative Education by focusing on the system and social and policy contexts rather than on educational content.

Another factor that characterises Japanese Comparative Education relates to its relatively short history in these institutions. Since there were already established programmes and specialists in sociology, administration, economics and other studies of domestic education, Comparative

Education found its position, which does not conflict with existing academic fields. Therefore, it insulated itself from educational borrowing for domestic adaptation by becoming less committed to drawing policy implications or having ideological agendas. Such attitude in research is peculiar not only in comparison to the scholarly practices in the English language but also to those before and during World War II when foreign educational studies were closely linked with the national interest of modernisation or colonialism.

12.4.2 Comparative Education in Japan as a Major Donor for International Development

The 1990s saw a dramatic increase in JCES membership, which accompanied a new research trend shared among people whose backgrounds differed from conventional comparative educationists. As the author discusses elsewhere (Yamada 2015, 2022 forthcoming), Japan became the top provider of official development aid to developing countries in 1990 and continued to be a major donor afterward. To design and implement education-related projects overseas, the Japanese government invested in training young experts. Graduate schools on international development were established in some national universities in Japan, while scholarships were provided to those who pursued postgraduate degrees in relevant fields at overseas educational institutions. Then, those oriented towards international development constituted a significant group in JCES. Unlike those trained in the schools of education in research universities, the emerging group trained in the schools of international development and cooperation is driven by the global agenda such as EFA, MDGs or SDGs and the desire to feed the policymaking process with their research findings. It is telling that an increasing number of papers published in CE-J were about Africa and Latin America, unlike in the earlier period when most papers were about Western countries or Asia.

Reflecting such changing dynamics in JCES in the 1990s invited articles increased in the category of 'trends of international development aid' and 'gender', with the special

issue in 1996 titled, "Women, Development, and Education: Consideration on the Issues for Comparative Education". The themes of special issues and topical research collections became diversified in the following decade.

12.4.3 Contemporary Role of Comparative Education

Nowadays, be it Comparative Education or not, it is common to conduct studies of the situations in other countries, which raises the question of the academic core of Comparative Education. If foreign studies alone cannot constitute the academic identity of Comparative Education, are there any theories or methodologies which define its uniqueness? Such self-searching inquiries are not unrelated to the fact that special issues of the journal repeatedly provoke discussion about research trends and epistemology. In the 1990s, the expansion of JCES occurred by incorporating a global agenda which have not been looked at in any educational fields, such as international development, gender or human rights. While securing its unique position, such a trend has further alienated Comparative Education from domestic educational challenges and practices.

Now, to conclude this section, we would like to call the readers' attention to the potential role of Comparative Education studies in shedding light on the domestic challenges from comparative perspectives developed through the studies of societies very different from Japan. For example, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning process is growingly personalised by requiring students to study at home with the aid of new educational technologies. The learning process has not been shared and hidden from the teachers' eyes in the prolonged lockdown of schools. This is a global phenomenon experienced by all students and teachers. Therefore, Japanese comparative educationists may need to get away from the familiar presupposition that Japanese educational practices are better and more mature than those societies they study and consider the means to overcome common challenges. To do that, researchers should distinguish the local and cross-

cutting factors in their comparative studies and be ready to commit to the policymaking of their own societies.

Another example of the contemporary phenomena which affects many societies simultaneously is the global educational discourse that influences not only national policymaking but also teaching and learning practices in the classroom. Many comparative educationists recognise and analyse the effect of international assessments such as PISA or discourse on twenty-first competencies on national policies. However, because of their disconnection from domestic affairs, they tend not to take part in the discussion on the acute educational challenges of their own countries. We think there is also a demand for Comparative Education today to analyse global themes that are connected to the classroom level and provide perspectives that would be overlooked by people who only focus on domestic issues. That way, Comparative Education studies can link the global and the local, and policies and practices, in the true sense.

12.5 Conclusion Emanating From the Chapters of the Book: From A Comparative and International Education Perspective.

The theme of this book is the scope for partnership and collaboration between Japanese and South African universities. During the past 30 years, since the end of the Cold War, international donors (mainly from the Global North) have poured US\$1.2 trillion worth of development assistance into Africa (Mills 2021:1). Yet little can be shown for this effort. The goals which had driven this aid largely seem as far away as in 1990. In launching a partnership programme between South African and Japanese universities, the potential significance of Comparative and International Education scholarship lies in teasing out challenges faced by the education sector in South Africa, contributing to a fuller understanding of these challenges and drawing on the experience of the rest of the world, including Japan, in tabling suggestions on how to address these challenges.

The chapters of this book have transpired much in terms of scope and caveats for collaboration between Japanese and South African universities. There is a role for scholars of Comparative and International Education in these two countries to guide the process of collaboration. Chapter 9 explained that Japanese universities long neglected the internationalisation of higher education to their own detriment. In the frantic race of universities in every national jurisdiction to become super institutions in the early twenty-first century, the recently published edited volume of Black (2022) underscores how internationalisation has risen to the top of the agenda among Japanese universities. Already in the first chapters of this book, surveying the societal and higher education contextual contours of South Africa and Japan, it was made clear that the demographic complementarity of South Africa and Japan makes these two jurisdictions ideal partners for university partnerships. The case studies presented in this book provide objective lessons in the advantages of international university partnerships, between Japanese and African universities in particular. These include brain circulation, gaining wide exposure in research fields, getting access to data, giving wider public fora to indigenous knowledge systems, gaining academic mentoring and linking the world of education with the world of work.

It is by focusing on these potential benefits of partnerships between Japanese and South African universities that scholars of Comparative and International Education can play a valuable role.

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