

PREFACE

It is natural to compare. Comparison is fundamental to understanding – not only understanding what makes one phenomenon like another, but also what makes many phenomena different from the others. Examining various social science phenomena and comparative studies fields by looking at them comparatively allows for a holistic approach to understanding rather than trying to achieve understanding as a conglomeration of isolated phenomena. Since the context of comparative study is one of the most important yet misunderstood influences on comparative research in all fields, this volume aims to build a conceptual infrastructure for comparative research, which is relevant to all comparative studies and fields across disciplines. To do this, the capacity for understanding and identifying the comparative method in various fields is necessary. And, to sustain comparative collaboration and mutual benefit, this volume builds an interdisciplinary base for continued awareness, development, and application of comparative studies.

Based on the inaugural session of the International Symposium of Comparative Sciences, held in Sofia, Bulgaria (October 2013), this volume of the International Perspectives on Education and Society series focuses on the distinctions, overlap and integration of comparative studies across disciplinary boundaries, broadly speaking. Each part of this volume has been developed to provide a shared space for us to hear regional and cultural voices from different fields of study, to recognize ways that comparative research in one field translates to another, and to identify and appreciate new or under-emphasized topics and issues in the comparative sciences broadly speaking.

This volume is organized into two parts. Part I includes chapters that address methodological considerations in comparative sciences. These methodological considerations range across several fields and disciplines, including comparative education, comparative pedagogy, comparative analysis, comparative teacher education, and comparative law. Wolhuter's chapter addresses crises of identity in comparative education by addressing 10 issues that prevent comparative education from achieving its full potential. This is then followed by Wolhuter's explanation of the potential of

comparative education compared to other comparative sciences. Ermenc's chapter on comparative pedagogies follows and perhaps answers some of Wolhuter's questions by addressing the conceptualization of comparative pedagogies from a European perspective. Much like Wolhuter, however, Ermenc also questions the meaning of comparative pedagogy and then proposes a new and more distinct definition of this construct.

Fedotova and Chigisheva's chapter follows Ermenc's with a question about ideological indoctrination through comparative analysis as well as the potential for comparative analysis to reveal ideology. The author's comparative study suggests that micro and macro contexts can be mechanisms to distinguish comparative research. Prochner, Cleghorn, Kirova, and Massing's chapter is a research note, which provides an example of the type of comparative analysis that Fedotova and Chigisheva's approach and attempt to identify as well as challenge ideological indoctrination through comparative study, although that is not the authors' necessary intent. Instead, Prochner et al. propose and comment on a study of early childhood teacher education programs in Namibia and Canada from a decidedly Canadian perspective, which emphasizes the importance of preparing "teachers to dovetail children's preparation for school with meaningful connections to the culture and language of the home community" with the stated goal of "effectiveness" and an assumed understanding of what "majority and minority worlds" need.

Finally, Part I concludes with Heidemann's chapter, which comparatively interprets standards in uniform international law. The author argues that a comparative approach may be key to developing uniform standards for the application of particular laws, but this perspective goes beyond comparative law itself. The contributions of comparison to normative isomorphism in education, law, philosophy, literature, and a host of other fields and disciplines are possible.

The chapters in Part II are empirical comparative studies and represent the fields and disciplines of comparative higher education, comparative education, comparative leadership and management, comparative analyses, and comparative public policy from a legal perspective. Part II begins with Biraimah and Jotia's chapter critically analyzing study abroad programs to emerging nations through a distinct analytical structure involving framework development, critical questioning, and the examination of challenges to study abroad partnerships, in particular. The emphasis of this chapter is on the partnership both in terms of the program development, but also in terms of providing a comparative framework for developing an equitable relationship between the two universities engaged in the partnership.

Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova's chapter then focuses on the influence higher education has on the construction of social trust using a European comparative perspective. This cross-national study of 19 different European countries uses a quantitative methodology to implement the comparative method. The role of key intervening and other independent variables in impacting the dependent variable of social trust is discussed and empirically and comparatively studied. The potential distinguishing characteristics of micro and macro contexts (much like Fedotova and Chigisheva's chapter) are raised by Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova to suggest that social trust is a characteristic of both individuals and social systems.

Mncube, Davies, and Naidoo's chapter comparatively analyzes two schools in South Africa to distinguish democratic school governance, leadership, and management, but instead of taking a quantitative approach like Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova, Mncube et al. use qualitative methods. Using a qualitative approach the authors were less able to generalize their findings, but they were able to identify two structures for democracy in school governance, leadership, and management. Their careful comparative, qualitative analysis is important not only because of its findings that teachers need training in different democratic ways of operating schools, but also that teachers need multiple options for change.

Rukspollmuang's chapter on education for international understanding in Thailand is an empirical comparative study of the development of a culture of peace in education. However, not only is this an important empirical piece, but it is also representative of the fact that comparative empirical analyses do not have to compare across nation-state boundaries. Instead, this comparative study looks comparatively across international and national systems, which suggests that comparative science can be comparative across units of analysis as well as within them.

Finally in Part II, Pera and Nicolosi's chapter presents a comparative study of Italian women's education and skills and the relationship of women's condition in Italy with legal policies, in particular. To follow up on a methodological consideration that was a theme of comparative sciences and the chapters in Part I, Pera and Nicolosi's chapter analyzes both micro- and macro-choices. The micro/macro comparison is a consistent (or perhaps persistent) theme throughout this volume, and while Pera and Nicolosi conclude that the micro/macro comparison is not only among choices (represented by legal instruments and policies) but also across units of analysis (e.g., national laws and policies versus European legal rules and models).

The audience for this volume spans many fields and disciplines and includes authors and topics for study and analysis within the chapters, which span these fields and disciplines as well. Nikolay Popov and I extend a sincere and heartfelt thank you to the contributors to this volume, to the participants in the 2013 International Symposium of Comparative Sciences, and to the anonymous chapter reviewers. They each contributed to the development and enhancement of the quality and rigor of each chapter, the volume as a whole, and to the International Perspectives on Education and Society series as a whole. The development, definition, and application of comparative sciences both for theoretical scholarship and practical application is not only important to those of us who do comparative research, but to all who are invested in comparative science broadly speaking. It is my sincere wish that this volume will serve to enhance and inform comparative studies in all fields and disciplines, and serve also as a mechanism for developing knowledge and facilitating meaningful reflection and understanding.

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