



## PANEL

# Socrates, Salamanca and Science Historical and Humanist Motifs in Comparative Education

To be chaired by



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Motifs in the history – and in recent academic histories – of comparative education have included positivism, the scientific method, methodological empiricism, the instrumental-developmental conception of education, and discussion of the potentials of various social sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science and economics).

However, what of our longer and deeper roots in a commitment to notions of the human, to notions of ‘education’, and to comparative education as a historical humanistic *episteme*? What of our traditional concerns with the nature of a ‘good’ education, and the ideal of the ‘well-educated’ human being? These themes – quintessentially human concerns – were central in the work of the earlier well-known and now almost-forgotten generation of historical-philosophical-cultural-and-liberal-humanist comparativists, such as William Brickman, Nicholas Hans, Isaac Kandell, Friedrich Schneider, and Robert Ulich.

Are we still trying to understand the human condition expressed in myriad educational forms (and if not, why not)? Or perhaps, real human beings are currently not at the centre of our work (but if not, why not)?

To sustain us in exploring such questions, we have traditions, not least those drawn from classical and Renaissance humanism and notions of science. We also have a wide range of conceptual tools with which to think, for example, *paideia*, *studia humanitas*, *Bildung* and several classic questions about what it is to be educated (including Socrates’ classic question about the “paideia of the soul”).

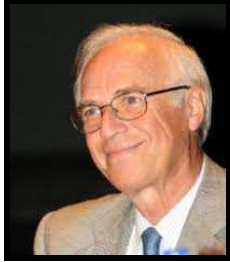
And so, contemporaneously, what do we as comparative educationists now make of the question of what it is to be human? And, contemporaneously, what do we as comparative educationists make of humanism itself?

How do we take up the challenges of humanism as it travelled historically and was contextualised in many places, including Salamanca? Has our view of natural science and the social sciences narrowed to the point where we are thinking of them as European and as a set of skills and as a policy tool-box? Have we forgotten the regeneration of science in the Muslim world—science as part of civilisation—and the rescue of some of its original motifs: its contribution to our understanding of the lived world and of ourselves, as well as later claims that “doing (good) science” embraces principles of freedom, including freedom of spirit and of speech? Do we, these days, reject Lauwery’s concept of ‘scientific humanism’?

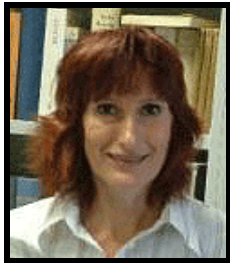
This Panel offers an opportunity to explore these themes and the permanent challenge to comparative educationists: what is it to be historical and academic actors in social contexts, including the present social contexts? In what sense has the study of the past something to say to us, as comparative educators, today – especially in histories of the “gendered”, “raced”, “classed”, and religious human being? What, as comparative educationists, are our preferred epistemological paradigms, and what are our moral visions, especially as we invent forms of comparative education which involve thinking about post-structural, post-feminist, post-colonial, post-socialist interpretations of the world?

Right now, what are we saying, in the inner core of our work, about being human? Answering that question probably involves saying something – comparative and precise – about the human being in history and history in the human being.

## CONTRIBUTORS



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