

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS CESE EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

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Retrospect

This meeting has been a Special Conference to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of CESE. José Luis García Garrido gave a retrospect to the first 25 years, mentioning the most important events and stages in the development of our Society. My task consists in giving the «General Report» which will deal with an effort to highlight the process of this Conference. Moreover, you may forgive me for linking this summarising activity with some reflections which have come to my mind as a member of this Society, not since its founding assembly in 1961, but at least since the middle of the sixties. The second Conference in Berlin was the first conference I was participating in. Let me recall this event for two reasons. The Berlin Conference was the last meeting convening most of CESE's founding fathers, among whom there were such eminent scholars as Madame E. Hatinguais, Nicholas Hans, Joseph Lauwerys, Friedrich Schneider and Franz Hilker. The focal plenary lecture was given by the renowned Israeli philosopher and educationist Ernst Simon, a friend and follower of Martin Buber; it dealt with the interrelation between education and morality.

However, there is a second reason for reminding ourselves of the Berlin Conference. It concerns the man who organised it: Saul Robinsohn in his capacity as one of the Directors of the Max-Planck-Institute of Educational Research (in Berlin). Saul Robinsohn should be given a special appreciation because of his long-year activities for the benefit of CESE. It had been Robinsohn's initiative in approaching Lauwerys to hold the founding Conference (Amsterdam, 1963), at that time being the Director of the UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg. And it was his tragic death in 1972, a few months after he had taken over the presidency of CESE, that left a deep gap in the development of our Society. The first decade of CESE is, therefore, closely related to Robinsohn's commitment to CESE and to Comparative Education in general. In a time like ours when people are rather inclined to forgetting what lays behind them, it seems legitimate to devote some thoughts to retrospective considerations which I have done,

thus reinforcing our President's impressive considerations.

However, doing this is not just a matter of reverence to distinguished scholars and their works, but at the same time a suitable occasion to make us aware of the variety and profundity of resources waiting for being read, re-evaluated and followed up. There is no need for each generation to behave as if it were necessary to discover America again. In this context references to the «pre-history» of Comparative Education as offered, for instance, by Alessandro Leonarduzzi, help us re-consider the point where we find ourselves, as do the references to the founding fathers of the «first generation», such as Michael Sadler whose merits have been conveyed to us by J.H. Higginson. There is no doubt that the «pre-history» and «history» of Comparative Education have not been completed yet — in particular with regard to the national or local centres having functioned as focal agencies in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In spite of the respect all historians of Comparative Education have paid to Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris and Victor Cousin one cannot contest the «north-oriented», in particular Anglo-american and German, prevalence characterising Comparative Education until the beginning of the seventies. The entrance of France into the theoretical and methodological debate, expressed, above all, by the incorporation of the Durkheimian heritage and of the modern sociological schools of thought (such as Bourdieu), has opened a new chapter, and what we have learned from our Spanish and Italian colleagues has stimulated our curiosity as well as our search for further enrichment for the sake of clarifying the sources to be investigated and utilised for further inquiry. In this context mention should be made about García Hoz' and Tusquet's enlightening retrospects to Spain's heritage they presented at Valencia (1979), while Vittorio Telmon's paper about «Some contributions of Italian scholars to Comparative Education», given at this Conference, has filled a correspondent gap in regard of Italy. To complete this brief historical excursion, it is also the identification of deficits, as presented by Waltraud Harth-Peter about the reception (or non-reception) of French, Spanish and Italian philosophy of education in Germany, which reminds us of further tasks in this direction. The inclusion of Russia (resp. the Soviet Union) and Eastern Europe, let alone the wide area of non-European societies and cultures, will certainly widen our views — and complicate our tasks which we cannot escape from at any rate.

Plenary papers

Let us now, however, jump to the present time or, to put it in a more concrete way, to this Conference. Thanks to the hospitality offered by the *Istituto per la Formazione Europea* (ISFE) and the *Comunità del Garda* and to the support given by the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction and the Italian Commission for UNESCO, CESE has been given the opportunity to celebrate its 25th Anniversary at this beautiful place. The plenary ses-

sions were devoted to five presentations dealing with fundamental issues of Comparative Education within the network of social sciences and humanities.

Lamberto Borghi called our attention to the interrelation of theory and practice in regard of their relevance for Comparative Education. He specified this problem area by investigating the interdependence between social and natural ecology culminating in a passionate appeal to comparatists to pay their contribution to overcoming man's alienation of science and its parallel trends given by the alienation of man from nature and himself. Borghi underlined his reflection by referring to Dewey and the Frankfurt School as well as to modern authors who have expressed their thoughts about the ecological crisis of our epoch.

Winfried Böhm concentrated his considerations on the «ontological» implications of Comparative Education, based upon the criticism of what he identified as the technological reduction, and leading to a plea for future-oriented «adventures» which should transcend the empirical-analytical level and aim at projecting the «ideal men» according to Bogdan Suchodolski's conception.

It was Bogdan Suchodolski himself who clearly defined Europe's role in history, paying distinct attention to its dark sides, characterised by domination and suppression against the non-European world. The conclusion he draw pertains to what he called the «new education» to be dedicated to «repairing the human matters».

Mauro Laeng confronted us with the «pluridimensional» character of the methods applied and to be applied in Comparative Education. His lecture was of direct concern to CESE's history, since it drew the line from the early descriptive works to the complex situation where we find ourselves, loaded with decisions on how to move forward in our methodological efforts.

Lê Thành Khôi opened the door to the dimension which covers the policy-oriented and policy-influencing function of international studies. The clue of his well-documented analysis pertains to the dependence of the contributions such studies could make to the development of societies, in particular in Third World Countries, on their orientation on the sociopolitical frameworks in which they have been conducted.

Taken as a whole, the plenary papers whose cores I have tried to summarise, pointed the way for the work of the four working groups.

Working groups: Thematic areas

You have been informed on the process and outcome of the discussions the participants concentrated on, stimulated by a considerable number of papers presented. It would be senseless to duplicate the contents of the group reports; nor can I give a full report of the variety of arguments given in the discussions, since I have not been able to take part in all of them personally.

This framework, or to say better, this limitation given, I feel like presenting my own impressions, whereby I should like to point out that omitting individual papers or neglecting individual arguments should by no means be understood as a value judgement. Let me consider my following considerations as rather a series of snapshots which fix certain moments of a complex and diversified process of reflections, while your expectations to get an overview of the work should be directed to the Proceedings to follow, let alone your wish to enter into a in-depth analysis of the individual papers. This has been a commemorative meeting, and it is not surprising at all that the considerations and argumentations were focussed on these three levels of examination:

- What has Comparative Education done during the past 25 years to clarify its place within the scientific system?
- What are the criteria which allow us to identify our present stage of research and teaching?
- What conclusions are to be drawn in regard of the perspectives for our discipline?

These three levels oriented to the time dimension provided the framework for the identification of a number of problems the most relevant of which, according to my view, may be assigned to the following thematic areas:

- 1) The tension between the epistemological goal, given by the theoretical quality of our discipline, and its policy-orientation with special regard to international commitment;
- 2) the methodological issue in regard of the preference for mono or pluridimensional methods;
- 3) the object of Comparative Education, as identified against the background of internal and external motivations and expectations;
- 4) the contribution of Comparative Education to the curriculum of educational or social sciences with special regard to the education of teachers, education officers and other «professionales» in the field of educational practice;
- 5) the position of Comparative Education in the tension between self-constraint to scientific analysis and engagement in political decision-making in the present period of uncertainty and radical challenge.

As regards the first thematic area, the tension between theory and policy-orientation can be traced back to Jullien de Paris and, in particular, has strongly affected the history of Comparative Education in this century. Is Comparative Education an educational or, in a wider context, social science whose legitimation is rooted in its contribution to exploring, analysing, explaining and appraising the field of education with its neighbouring areas?, or: is Comparative Education primarily legitimized by its engagement in improving educational practice and advising political decision-making? These are the crucial questions which were resumed in

working group II, stimulated by Edmund King's and Andreas Kazamias' papers and interventions. The debate highlighted the progress which has been made in recent years at both levels.

The theory-oriented side was represented by Jürgen Schriewer's reference to the ongoing reflections within the project which has been initiated by Brian Holmes as part of the activities of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. Andreas Kazamias' efforts to define the sociopolitical concept of the State and its impact on Comparative Education indicate another theory-based approach. Edmund King's recent activities, on the other hand, have been driven from his research into the educational situation of young adults against the current socioeconomic and political changes. The debate which can be outlined only, exemplifies the wide range of papers submitted to groups II and III, for instance Ricardo Marín Ibáñez' paper discussing the need for further elaborating the «tertium comparationis».

The methodological issue is closely connected with the goal-related debate. Several papers, especially submitted by a number of Italian and Spanish participants, pertained to the application of analytical methods. Beyond such pragmatic contributions the debate about the exclusive or, at least, predominant role of one of the «classical» methods came forth at this Conference again. The aforementioned plea for comparison of educational philosophies through text interpretation, put forward by Winfried Böhm, on the one side, and George Psacharopoulos' explicit argumentation in favour of quantitative methods based upon elaborated statistical techniques on the other side, may be quoted as the poles of the whole spectrum.

It was Aldo Visalberghi who, responding to Böhm radical plea, underlined the need for pluridimensional approaches by referring to his experiences gained in his engagement in the IEA studies. His point of view was not only reinforced by Mauro Laeng (in his aforementioned lecture), but also underlined by several discussants. There was considerable agreement on the interrelations between methodic choices and the contents as well as the purpose of research projects. It is just this interrelation, it was repeatedly pointed out, that obliges comparatists to keep the methodological discussion on the agenda, since pluridimensional orientation must not be confused with arbitrariness in favour of any specific option.

The third thematic area dealing with the objects of comparative studies signalled the continuation of the debate about the internal and external motivations dominating the selection of «relevant» themes and projects. Is it education as a «relative autonomous» area (within the science system) which should set priorities out of its own needs both at its fundamental and applied level? Which is the role of governmental and non-governmental social agencies in expressing demands on educationists? Comparative Education is involved in this controversial question of insofar as comparatists are, on the one hand, members of the scientific community whereas, on the other hand, their advice is asked by regional, national and

international policy-making agencies (whereby the necessarily emerging question of whether such advice is factually accepted and utilised, was also raised, but not discussed in detail).

The debate in group III (as summarised by Anne-Marie Goguel in her report) dealing with the need for investigating the impacts of political regionalisation on the education system and, moreover, for comparison in pedagogy and in-school research, indicated, however, that «relevance» of research must be sought and defined beyond the tension of relative educational autonomy and political commitment which, as experience teaches, has to be conceived as a texture of interdependencies. Gabriele Weigand's paper gave an instructive example of this interrelation in conceptualising the «intercultural dimension of pedagogy and education».

The participants of group IV were directly concerned with the interrelation between research in Comparative Education and teaching Comparative Education at universities and (other) teacher training institutions. Margaret Sutherland's paper, departing from the critical situation Comparative Education has to cope with in the United Kingdom, deserves special attention for two reasons: on the one hand it was «comparative» in its approach itself, since it implicitly pointed to analogous situations in a great number of European countries. On the other hand it allocated the current crisis to four major factors crystallising into the question: «Are the problems of expanding the teaching of Comparative Education system specific or an inevitable result of the nature of Comparative Education itself?» In the light of this critical analysis the proposals for establishing a CESE's training programme in Comparative Education, put forth by Francesc Pedró and Marc Vansteenkiste, should be considered as an actual and active offer to provide some help improving the deficits in the teaching of our discipline.

Let me come to the fifth and last thematic area which comes very near the first one insofar as it resumes the controversy dealing with «theory-versus policy-orientation». Its legitimation as a specific domain, however, was brought to light in the plenary as well as in most group discussions, at least in a latent way. To exemplify its manifest articulation I have to return to the above-outlined debate between Andreas Kazamias and Edmund King. Kazamias defines Comparative Education as a «analysing» and «explaining» discipline, basing his approach on what he calls «comparative historical analysis» and drawing a demarcation line against defining it as a «predictive field». Edmund King, on the other hand, distinctly ties Comparative Education to the task of producing action-oriented research for the purpose of «asking new questions» in a period of social and educational dynamics and existential «uncertainty», thus resuming Lamberto Borghi's reflections about people's relationship to society and nature under the pressure of alienation and Bogdan Suchodolski's considerations about Europe's educational mission. Those who are familiar with the history of our discipline will easily find support for both versions, e.g. Joseph

Lauwerys comparing Comparative Education with navigation, and, on the other hand, Saul Robinsohn's conceiving curriculum reform as a means of people's and society's enlightenment.

It is high time to stop explaining what my «snapshots» have grasped and fixed. I am fully aware of the incompleteness of this attempt to draw the sum of five plenary and the twenty-six working group papers which I was able to collect. Whoever feels misunderstood or neglected by this presentation, is kindly asked to consider the conditions necessarily setting the framework for the production of this report.

Some synthesising remarks

Let me add some synthesising remarks to the core of this general report with particular reference to the specific character of this Conference. CESE has crossed the threshold into a new period, leaving its first 25 years behind. Our President's retrospect to CESE's part played in the progress of Comparative Education has been materialised by a good number of the papers. Pointing back to my previous remarks, I feel justified to state that CESE does not enter its new period of existence with an empty box. Even those whose appraisal of CESE's activities is rather negative, may realise that their alternative concepts and suggestions might be much poorer without the possibility to fight their battles against substantial adversaries. To examine this statement you may read or re-read the Proceedings of CESE's twelve ordinary Conferences. They provide evidence about debates concerning theoretical and methodological issues, such as the Conferences of Berlin (1965), London (1977) and Geneva (1981).

On the other hand they have documented CESE's efforts to face actual desiderata in full awareness of the tensions existing between the «explanatory» and «policy-oriented» motivations. Underlining Raymond Ryba's remarks in the preceding General Assembly I am thinking of themes such as Secondary Education Curriculum (Prague 1969), Teacher Education (Stockholm 1973), Adult and Recurrent Education (Frascati 1973), Education and Community (Sèvres 1975), Multicultural Education (Würzburg 1983) and Education and Technology (Antwerp 1985). Giving this retrospect I should like to add that the proposition made by Pedró Garfella Esteban and José M. March for a study of CESE's production is worth encouraging.

However, there is no reason for contentment, taken into particular consideration the problems which Margaret Sutherland has identified in her paper and which have been brought to light again in Marc Vans-teenkiste's group report (group IV). Those who lay the financial and administrative grounds for the maintenance of institutes and working places question the «relevance» of Comparative Education in both teaching and

research. This widespread attitude would be less dangerous and threatening if it were not reinforced by the declining, if not diminishing position of Comparative Education within the community of educationists, whereby the weakened position of Education as a whole has proved to be a contracting factor. One of the most alarming consequences of this critical situation is the decrease of students in our field of work which could easily be confirmed by an analysis of recent developments in a good number of universities.

Postulates

Struggling for survival of institutes and working places is, therefore, to be accepted as a challenge. It is true this is, to a great extent, a matter of influencing decision-makers in the area of politics and administration which I will not indulge in here. Meeting the challenges, however, is also a matter of self-evaluation and self-improvement. It is this second dimension I want to articulate by putting forward the following six postulates:

First, Comparative Education must continue its theoretical efforts in an argumentative way to be characterised by sophistication, openness and what I should call «tolerant rigorosity».

Second, Comparative Education must not stop in permanently reconsidering its place in a science system which is becoming increasingly based on pluridisciplinary approaches. In particular Comparative Education should accept any advice and help from neighbouring or also distant disciplines which assign particular weight to comparison in their methodological and methodic efforts.

Third, the survival and future existence of Comparative Education will highly depend on its willingness to play its part as a consultant to educational practice, both on the macro-level of politics of education and the micro-level of classrooms and other places where education happens.

Fourth, Comparative Education must be alarmed by the threat of gliding into a community of seniores. The decline of students is imminent as such; it should call our particular attention to and care for the promotion both of our young colleagues and those students who are able and willing to study Comparative Education in full awareness of the uncertainty with regard to directly utilising their knowledge in their future professional careers.

Fifth, Comparative Education must be prepared and ready to open its theoretical interests to all the crucial issues which concern the survival of humankind under human conditions. Meeting this challenge means not indulging in short-term fashions.

While the five postulates I have been tried to identify up to this point affect the objective level of our work, the sixth and last postulate is related

to us as researching individuals and communities. It seems to me that this Conference has given various evidence of how difficult it is to understand each other in our own realm of professional work. We use notions, such as «school», «local environment», «state» etc. believing that our adresses, in any place, automatically associate the same connotations with them. This observation has particular relevance to the connotation we associate with the notion of «pupil». It makes great difference whether the «pupil» is primarily considered as the target and lowest rank of a hierachically structured administrative system or as the participant person in a long-year teaching and learning process. The empiric evidence that «national» types are to be identified somewhere in the middle of both extreme positions, does not make the problem less complicated.

It is true that this problem has a universal, epistemologically determined core. However, it is also rooted in how and in what context we have acquired these notions and how we have been taught to apply them in our professional as well as in our everyday speech. It may seem that this last postulate is of secondary relevance. I should like you to agree with me that such an assumption is wrong, for turning our attention to this problem is by no means an invitation to play with glass pearls, but a challenge to pay our contribution to the universalisation of our national idioms as a base for mutual communication and understanding.