

THE PROSPECT OF EDUCATION FOR EUROPE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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This is a topic where, it would seem to me, all the concepts involved are at least questionable.

There are many questions concerning the epistemological status of Comparative Education. The task of Comparative Education, its relevance, its scope and meaning have been discussed since the days of Bereday and Lauwerys. Even today, most comparatists would not have even the slightest interest in attempting to make a contribution to European Education, in the sense of European integration, and it would seem that the description of educational differences between countries results time and again in the painful observation of the obvious.

Secondly, the very concept of Europe itself is questionable. What is Europe? Is Europe merely a political term, or is it only the geographic denomination of a given continent? Can we still talk about Europe as a concept in cultural terms? Are not the divisions between East and West, north and south, Capitalism and Marxism, Democracy and Communism, such that in order to simplify things, we generally have to talk about western Europe, or even about the rich developed countries in the north western corner of Europe?

Thirdly, from an educational perspective, many say that Europe is exhausted, that it cannot present challenging frontiers or adventures in spacial or spiritual dimensions. Is not the problem of education for the future more challenging in the third world countries than in Europe? But there again, the very concept of «education for» implying an education for a specific purpose, is a sticky concept. In saying that education can be at least theoretically conceived for something or other would be implying some sort of underlying ideological structure. I can imagine that not only logical positivists, but also empiricists and even leftists would immediately protest, claiming that education is not something given, but something that must be continually recreated. All too often, education is caught up looking towards the glories of the past rather than poking into the unexplored secrets of the future.

Finally, the title of this topic includes the term «prospects». This is

hardly a scientific term. It certainly is not analytical nor empirical. In considering educational prospects, I could be leaving aside all scientific competence and entering the realm of fantasy and utopia.

And so, the shortcomings of these terms could further be discussed, but that is enough. In few pages it would be impossible to cut through this labyrinth of distinctions and jesuitical hairsplitting finesse. I would have to declare myself incompetent to meet the challenge.

For this reason, my approach will not be strictly analytical, trying to clarify or define all these concepts. I fear that such an array of definitions would only lead to closing our thoughts and placing limits on prospects, approaches and even our dreams. Our duty is to pave the way with new ideas, unlock doors, and unearth hidden treasures, so that our youth may "dream their impossible dreams", which certainly could not be confined to precise definitions. My purpose will not be to provide with intellectual detail, but rather with some sort of overview or vision concerning the transcendental, in a Kantian sense, relationship between Comparative Education and Education for Europe. Thus I will not attempt to go into the problem of contents or into how-to-do-it recipes.

I will be searching for the conditions of possibility for any sort of relationship between these two concepts. In other words, I shall be raising the question of how should Comparative Education be understood, in order that it might contribute to an Education for Europe, or again, should Comparative Education be understood one way or another, what would these approaches look like, when dressed up in terms of contributions to European Education.

At first sight, this question might appear to be rather dry and boring, or merely academic. However, may I unmodestly say that, from my prospective it is an exciting question and worth to be discussed on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of CESE.

Thus in the first part of this lecture I would like to quote a German comparatist, in a volume dedicated to Albert Reble, our common teacher.

In it there is an article under the title of «Education and Culture — On the Theory and Methodology of Comparative Education» by Jürgen Schriewer, who proposes to cover three topics: 1) The total historical development of the discipline, from a problem oriented perspective; 2) A summary of all the scientific production of Comparative Education in three «paradigmas»; and 3) A complete categorization of the third paradigm, which to him seems to be the only one that can guarantee a scientific status to Comparative Education and deliver it from its pre-scientific origins, where it would seem that most of his colleagues still fumble in the mud. I could not but be astonished at the unbashful pretensions of one who after this article would have to be considered as a sort of pope and prophet of the field. But then I came to realize that it represents nothing but a line of thought that has become predominant over the past 25 years.

With regard to his first topic, may I say that he raises a question that was also Sadler's preoccupation. This is the question of the relevance of Comparative Education. Obviously in the beginnings there was a natural curiosity for wanting to know what goes on and how things are done in other places. In times when communications were difficult, it was important to know what went on elsewhere. But this stage would belong to the pre-history of Comparative Education.

However, in a way, the predominant motive behind all forms of Comparative Education had been born, as so often local educational policy could then be supported by the argument of what constitutes progress in other countries. This made it relevant to compare, and political reasons led to still further casual selectivity of case studies. But here again this selectivity was ambiguous and became an impediment for Comparative Education to develop into an objective science.

Secondly, may I comment his three «paradigmas» or approaches as it is hard to understand the use of such a lofty term. In his mind, the first two are not scientific. They refer to a historical and an evolutionist approach. The *historical* paradigm is monographic and descriptive of systems, often made by travelling scientists to far away countries. Their product was a book or a thesis on a given educational system. The *evolutionist* paradigm tries to point out similar evolutions in different countries, as could be the case for analyzing the impact of the British educational system on two colonial countries with different political structures.

In the third paradigm, that is to say the *empirical-analytical* one, comparison has come to take the place of experimentation. Logically the comparison is taken as a surrogate for experimental work.

Only within this paradigm, Comparative Education has acquired scientific status, and it became a necessary part of the entire field of educational sciences, such as history, sociology or economics of education. We can sum this up saying that Comparative Education, now as a science, uses comparisons to show causal relationships, and it specifies biological or sociological laws behind cultural realities.

Our author is certainly right when he states that any sort of scientific production which merely responds to the whims of politicians could not possibly go beyond pre-scientific approaches. He is also right in claiming that this third paradigm provides not only information but also explanations and thus a higher level of discourse.

But the problem lies exactly where he quotes Noah as saying that Comparative Education should be a «progressive transfer of attention from country characteristics to problems, and from problems to the specification of relationships and the formulation and testing of theories».

In this quotation it is very clear that the term «theory» is only referred to some «operational» theory, and relevance is only to be understood as scientific technological relevance. So, when Schriewer criticizes Sadler and his followers, saying that they were not able to conceive any form of

relevance other than political, he does not appreciate that his own theory is also highly reductionistic, in so much as he cannot conceive relevance beyond the realm of educational technology.

Now, if this is really the dominant trend, and through it Comparative Education aspires to fit into a comfy corner of a technologically conceived science of education, then, methodologically speaking, this might seem to be an enormous development, and from the point of view of modern science, it would be seen as progress.

Now, should we try to go beyond methodological myopia, and should we want to go beyond the limited views of scientific pharisees, who emphasize external aspects of their positions rather than enhance its interior spirit, then we must recognize that this progress has become a regression, that it is not true that further methodological developments make a field more scientific. This topic does not need further discussion. I am sure we are all familiar with the trend, even those who do not support it. Given the fact that this trend of Comparative Education aspires to being considered as modern science, I feel it could be useful to go into the *ontological implications* of modern science. This might seem to be taking us far away from our topic, but in fact it drives us right into the heart of the matter.

From an ontological perspective, we should try to make explicit what is implicit, and so consider the underlying principles that are rarely talked about in empirical analytical circles.

Above all, it is very clear that technology is not neutral nor universal nor can it be made universal. It is something that is culture specific, and it grew within the context of a given culture.

1) In the first place, modern science considers the entire universe as one great mechanism, a sort of machine, some of which can be explained when it is perceived. The problems of this machine are always in terms of *how-to-do-it* rather than *why-to-do-it*.

2) Secondly, for modern science, man is the absolute king of the Universe and of society. There is no superior life. The Cartesian distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* dominates all the scientific scene.

3) Thirdly, knowledge requires experiments, in other words intervention and organization, structuring reality in specific ways for particular purposes. From here it is easy to understand that the great stimulus for epistemological interventionism is the power of control.

4) Fourth, it is clear that modern science does not refer to wisdom or knowledge, but to calculation in both senses of the word.

5) Fifth, it basically understands that reality can be considered objectively. Without objective knowledge, modern science would fall through completely. Ontologically the world of objects is an objective world. Because the objective world has its own consistency and is regular, repetibility is the maximum criterium of modern science. (At this point it might be interesting to recall that for most cosmologies, something loses interest when it is repeated). But repetition is the basis for progress in modern

science.

6) Sixth, the basic reality for modern science is quantity. This of course does not deny the existence of immensity, but the understanding is that what cannot be quantified does not count for science. Space and time are the basic parameters, both are quantities that can be measured, and not qualities.

7) Seventh, for modern science reality is *either* a problematic abstraction that as such belongs to philosophical speculation *or* the sum of phenomena observed and observable. Reality would thus be merely the sum of its parts. Descartes would say that in order to analyze a problem it should be divided to manageable parts.

8) What is important is the individual, because individuals can be calculated, controlled and measured. Bacon's famous statement «Science is power», must be understood to say that scientific knowledge produces power.

9) And finally, our ninth point is that technology is the world of the media. These are the perfect instrumentalization. Technological machines and all the technocratic complex in general, justifies itself by its usefulness, providing more and more longevity, mobility, speed and control. Naturally the symbol of all this development is money.

The aristotelian distinction between praxis and poiesis is not considered by technology. All is transformed into poiesis and it is difficult to perceive the ideology of the «for what». This implicit and generalized utilitarianism conditions our life style and our styles of thought.

All these ontological presuppositions affecting modern science are important when we refer to Comparative Education as one of many modern sciences. Now it would not seem necessary to develop further these presuppositions. They allow us to raise the following question: if Comparative Education is based on these implicit ontological presuppositions, can it have any form of relationship with the concept of Education for Europe?

No doubt we would have to say that its relevance is only technological, even though most people do not bear in mind this presupposition. Technology is like an iceberg, and I am trying to point out the importance of what is under the water.

Now, if Comparative Education is completely based on these premises, which comparatists never seem to explicitly take into account, it can be relevant in terms of Education for Europe only under one condition, and that is that Education for Europe be conceived as the purely technological production of the European man.

But if Education for Europe is conceived as a creative cultural task, with its nucleus being European consciousness, reflecting the best of its history and culture, then this kind of Comparative Education will hardly be considered relevant.

If education were a question of production, then the question is who

produces the producers, who controls the controlers and so on till the question becomes irrelevant. On the other hand if it is a question of creativity and consciousness, then History of Education clearly shows that European Education was at its best when it generated a worldwide consciousness. The expansion of European culture could be interpreted in terms of imperialism or in terms of pastoral or cultural responsibility on a world wide level. Within the context of a capitalistic interest, education becomes imperialistic, and of course the spread of technology to all the cultures of the world implies yet another form of imperial colonialism and it leads unavoidably to the conflict of cosmologies that we experience today, especially in the so called Third World.

We should now turn to a deeper analysis of the underlying structure of European Education. It would seem that since Homer, going through the pre-socratics, the classics and all Christianity there has always been a given order, a cosmology, a vision of the cosmos, an *ordo creationis*. Even the fathers of modern science understand that nature is readable in the language of mathematics, because there is a mathematical order behind it. The structure of European education, as also that of any other, is unthinkable without this basic concept of order.

The teacher's task, throughout western history has been to represent this order, and transmit it to younger generations. The learner's duty has been to understand it and freely organize his life in accordance with it.

Throughout almost 3.000 years of European Education, we can always identify these underlying constitutive moments: Order, ratio and free will.

There are, finally, three principles that correspond to each of the three moments stated above. 1) The perception of order implies taking distance from what is merely manifest to the senses. Thus culture in western horizons always implies distance. 2) Rationality implies the priority of thinking over feeling, of things spiritual over those temporal, and 3) the concept of freedom which cannot be taken away from the European concept of Education and culture, implies the priority of ethics or morality over mere legality or pure utility.

This is hardly the moment to show that the European structure of Education has been violated or even destroyed in the course of the 19th century, and it might be sufficient to remember that authors such as Marx, Freud and Nietzsche point up to what extent each of these constitutive moments or principles have been blasted out of European education and culture.

One of the main reasons for the crisis of Europe, much deeper for sure, than that of the Pacific challenge or anything similar, is, according to my conviction, this destruction of the constitutive elements of European culture and education.

On the other hand, it would be no cheap or superficial venture to characterize our modern world in terms of the loss of these basic elements

of our traditional European culture.

Today we can talk about the increasing loss of man's capacity to take distance from everyday life; the increasing publicity of triviality makes it ever more difficult to move away from sensitive reality and appreciate what is beyond or further removed from our senses.

It is not hard to see how in our modern world sensuality reigns supreme over rationality. Everything must be put across attracting the senses. Neil Postman's «Dying for amusement», seems to characterize our times as well as the cult of self-fulfillment, interpreted in terms of satisfying one's individual desires, instincts, feelings, etc.

And finally, personal responsibility, manifest in free choices, seems to grow into a sort of «supermarket morality», according to which actions should be guided by whatever the majority of the consumers buy, or do.

Thus it would seem that at least a vulgarized pragmatistic *ethic of effects* seems to have won the battle over an *ethic of intentions*.

Understanding Education for Europe not as a technical problem but as a cultural task that stimulates and builds a European consciousness, implies giving priority to a different approach within Comparative Education, and the empirical-analytical paradigm results useless.

At this point, may I refer to yet another author, who is not only a comparatist, but also one of the great authorities in the field of philosophy and education: Bogdan Suchodolski. In one of his recent articles, which is indeed modest in its approach, and yet very profound in the level of his discourse, he distinguishes two categories of comparatists: those who only want to inform and analyze, without making any value statements, and those who undertake the responsibility of going beyond asceptic analysis and dare to inspire new education objectives and programs needed to face the crisis of the modern world.

I want to pick out just one point from his article under the title of: «Comparative Education and its new Objectives». He takes us back to a distinction that has been at the core of the European educational tradition, and has been ignored only by the scientific technological approach. This is the distinction between the real man and the ideal man.

From the point of view of the post-technological or anthropological approach we can reopen new prospects for Comparative Education as well as for «Education for Europe».

Neither of these concepts can be reduced to ever increasing qualification or perfection of the «real» man, preparing him to fit into some social function of society. Nor can they be limited to stuffing him with technological paraphernalia, which ultimately reduces him to the status of a tool. Both concepts must fully reflect the ideal man as a person, who fights any form of social repression, instrumentalization or reductionism. This ideal man is no form of objective reality, but a future oriented project.

We maintain that the education of this «ideal» man is the basic task of

Education for Europe, and neither socialization, considered philosophically, nor satisfaction of individual desires — within a psychological perspective, — of the so called «real» man, are sufficient. Education for Europe must go beyond these limitations and focus on the ideal European man, who is always a project or even a dream, and any form of education that should not bear this in mind, will not match the challenge of our times.

In writing this paper, last week during a trip to Latin America, I could not help equating the education of the ideal man, with the idea of a condor soaring over the Andes, whereas the other approach seemed comparable to those woolly llamas feeding in the fields below.

Now, returning to our concepts, we should ask ourselves what this distinction implies in terms of Comparative Education. Just to mention a few aspects, it certainly means that this field must untie the chains of empiricism and step over the mire of analytical approaches. It should no longer be dominated by methodological preferences and should again open its horizons towards the wealth of the European cultural tradition and the adventure of future oriented philosophical ideas.

Comparisons considered as scientific experiments maintain their «raison d'être», but they are limited to specific technological aspects. «Comparisons» of ideas, anthropological interpretations and cosmologies, etc., have to take at least the same place as the former and even play a more important role still. Cross cultural and comparative studies should not be studies about structures and systems but should lead to the *interpretation* of different cultural perspectives and philosophies, in order to widen horizons and enrich limited localistic viewpoints.

May I just provide one example. Studying the production of Comparative Education over the past 25 years in Europe, one can hardly miss the enormous research deficit concerning the philosophies of education sustained in different countries. What we know about this is painfully scarce and indeed a shame.

We must turn education back into a «sapere progettuale», that is to say, not merely into analytical knowledge but into a future oriented philosophy.

To conclude, I would like to close these very brief and very schematic considerations remembering that at the earliest origins of western culture, the verb «to think» had two different roots in the indo-german languages: «med—» and «men—». «Med—» as it is still present in Medicine, meditation or medium, means to seek one's place in the cosmos. «Men—» as it comes in mensura, metre, measurement, mendicant, is indicative of the quantitative aspect of world comprehension.

In the 16th Century both aspects were separated and this produced a disequilibrium in the world and within the individual. Modern European science and technology, no doubt, is the cult of «men—» and it is now that the time is ripe for both Comparative Education and Education for Europe to reconcile themselves with «med—». At least this seems necessary in order to meet the challenges of our times.