



Review article

Exploring Comparative Education through Definitions, History, Methods and Theories

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the field of comparative education, tracing its historical evolution, methodologies, and theoretical underpinnings. Beginning with an overview of early scholars who shaped the field, the study delves into varied methodological approaches such as Jullien's experimental deductive method and Bray and Thomas's multidimensional analysis. Theoretical perspectives, including Dependency Theory and Liberation Theory, are scrutinized for their impact on educational systems around the world. The Turkish context is interwoven in the study, highlighting its historical and contemporary relevance. This study employs the method of literature review to synthesize insights from diverse sources to present a holistic overview. This methodological approach guarantees a thorough examination of the definitional, historical, methodological, and theoretical aspects of comparative education while situating the study within the broader academic dialogue, thereby contributing to the ongoing discourse in this evolving field. Emphasizing a multidisciplinary approach, the study calls for collaborative efforts across disciplines to enrich global educational understanding. In conclusion, the study serves as a resource for scholars and practitioners, providing actionable suggestions for future research and practice. This study is expected to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on comparative education, offering insights for informed decision-making in the global educational landscape. Recommendations include fostering multidisciplinary collaborations, enhancing longitudinal studies, exploring innovative pedagogies, and addressing equity issues.

Keywords: Comparative Education, Definition, Historical Development, Method, Theory.

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INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of global education, understanding the nuances of various educational systems becomes imperative for informed decision-making and policy development. In the realm of educational discourse, comparative education emerges as an indispensable field, serving as a crucible for intellectual inquiry into the multifaceted dimensions of global educational systems. The evolution of comparative education as a distinct discipline is deeply rooted in the emergence of a globalized world, where cross-cultural insights and contextual understandings are essential for formulating effective educational policies (Jarvis, 2000).

Comparative education, as an academic discipline, stands at the crossroads of global inquiry, elucidating the complexities and diversities inherent in educational systems across the world. Rooted in the recognition that no educational system is an isolated entity, comparative education seeks to unravel the intricacies of various national and regional approaches to learning (Bray, 2003). This field of study engages in a systematic and cross-cultural analysis of educational structures, policies, and practices, fostering a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping learning environments globally.

At its core, comparative education endeavors to offer a panoramic view of educational systems that goes beyond national borders. It strives to identify patterns, similarities, and differences, unveiling the contextual nuances that influence the development and implementation of educational policies. By critically examining the historical evolution, methodological approaches, and underlying theories, comparative education provides a platform for scholars and educators to explore the dynamics of education within and across societies (Davies, 2009).

As an interdisciplinary field, comparative education draws upon insights from sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and political science (Masemann, 1990). Its scope extends from macro-level analyses, encompassing entire national education systems, to micro-level investigations that scrutinize classroom practices and pedagogical strategies. The overarching goal is to foster a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of education, transcending cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic boundaries.

Considering the abovementioned significance of comparative education as a scientific discipline, the current study aims at offering a meticulous examination of the diverse approaches employed in comparative education research. Moreover, the theoretical underpinnings of comparative education are rigorously scrutinized. By engaging with prominent theories, ranging from functionalist perspectives to critical and post-colonial frameworks, the study aims to provide readers with a nuanced comprehension of the intellectual currents that have shaped comparative education discourse. In a distinctive departure, this scholarly exploration also focuses on the specific case of Türkiye, threading a narrative that intertwines the broader global discourse on education with the unique historical and sociocultural

context of the Turkish educational landscape. In this line, this article seeks answers for the following research questions:

1. What is the definition and scope of comparative education?
2. What are the goals and benefits of comparative education?
3. How has the discipline of comparative education developed over time?
4. What is the theoretical framework of comparative education?
5. What are the methods employed in comparative education studies?
6. What are the problems encountered in comparative education studies?
7. What is the current look of comparative education in Türkiye?

MATERIALS and METHODS

This study employs traditional literature review as its primary methodological approach. By meticulously reviewing a wide array of academic sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and seminal contributions, this methodology aims to distill and critically analyze the wealth of knowledge that has accrued over time (Rozas & Klein, 2010). The process involves identifying key themes, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical findings within the literature, providing a robust foundation for understanding the evolution of comparative education as a discipline. This methodological choice not only ensures a comprehensive exploration of the definitional, historical, methodological, and theoretical dimensions of comparative education but also positions the study within the broader scholarly conversation, contributing to the ongoing discourse in this dynamic field.

In this context, we conducted research in databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar using the identified keywords related to the subject of the study both in English and Turkish (e.g., comparative education, karşılaştırmalı eğitim). We analyzed the relevant sources obtained within the framework of our research and included in the study.

FINDINGS

This part of the study presents the findings of the literature review. In this line, each research question is discussed under a different title separately.

Definition and Scope of Comparative Education

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the concept of education was meant to educate children only, and the education system was concerned with the school period, whereas education went beyond this narrow meaning and expanded to include both formal and non-formal education, and was accepted as a cultural development or socio-cultural movement in the 20th century (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). In

parallel with the understanding of the importance of education, educational sciences have also developed and diversified to include new fields such as educational sociology, educational economics and educational administration. In addition to the developments in the field of education, many changes have started to occur in daily life. In our world, which has become smaller with the development of transportation and communication tools, problems and events have also gained an international character. Education, which has its share of globalisation, has also gained an international character and started to show universality (Dale, 2005). Also, states that recognize the importance of education strive to improve their own education systems while also showing curiosity about developments in the education systems of other countries, thereby focusing their attention on the field of comparative education (Şahin, 2001, p.2). At this point, comparative education has emerged as a prominent discipline in educational studies.

Differences in definitions often arise due to varying cultural, historical, political and educational contexts. Comparative education, for instance, is influenced by the specific focus of the researchers, whether they emphasize systemic studies, pedagogy, cultural influences, or policy analysis (Cowen, 2009). In other words, the diverse approaches researchers adopt from social, cultural, and political perspectives have led to variations in the definitions of these concepts (Mavi et al., 2021, s. 2). Philosophical perspectives, methodological preferences, and the purpose of the study (academic, political, or reform-oriented) also shape definitions (Danijela & Jelena, 2020). Also, there is a focus on the multidimensionality and complexity inherent in the research apparatus of comparative education, a point highlighted by Tamtik (2014). This perspective underscores how even influential researchers encounter differing definitions due to the broad and diverse scope of comparative education.

The concept of comparative education has been defined by many researchers. UNESCO (1955) defines comparative education as a field that analyses national education systems by considering political, social and cultural factors. According to Türkoğlu (1998), comparative education is a discipline that helps to identify the similarities and differences of two or more education systems in different cultures and countries, explains phenomena that appear similar, and provides useful suggestions for educating people. According to another definition, comparative education is a field of research that identifies and interprets the current educational problems and their causes by referring to similar factors in other societies (Lauwerys et al., 1971). King (1979), on the other hand, defines comparative education as a field that shows the similarity of educational problems in the world, but also shows that these problems occur differently in different countries and that the solutions may be different.

Based on these definitions, Türkoğlu (1998) offers a list of the characteristics of comparative education. Firstly, comparative education as a discipline utilises all fields of educational sciences, which means that it has an interdisciplinary nature. It analyses cultural, economic, political and social relations as well as all educational phenomena such as formal and informal education, educational policies and

laws, financial resources and structures of education, purpose, content, method, tools and equipment of education. It also focuses on the similarities and differences of two or more regions, countries and continents. It endeavours to understand each phenomenon within its own educational system. Lastly, although it has a specific study aim, its ultimate aim is to solve educational problems.

Comparative education, which has been emphasised a lot in recent years and has many definitions, can also be misinterpreted. For this reason, in order to better understand comparative education, what comparative education is not should also be emphasised. First of all, comparative education is not a field that aims to provide a worldwide solution to educational problems (King, 1979). On the contrary, it is a field that enables countries to act within a broad perspective while searching for solutions to their own educational problems by analysing educational phenomena in various countries.

In addition, comparative education is not a field that finds it sufficient to analyse only educational institutions when examining any educational system (Lauwerys et al., 1971). It also analyses the social and political factors affecting education by investigating what is behind what is visible in terms of educational practices while taking into consideration the main and secondary factors affecting education. In addition, Lauwerys, Varış and Neff state that comparative education is not a field that lists educational systems in a catalogue by describing them as they are today. Comparative education is a field that investigates the underlying causes of educational systems. For example, it tries to understand why some education systems are advanced while others lag behind, why some promote freedom and innovation while others remain under the pressure of political ideologies.

Türkoğlu (1998), on the other hand, emphasises that comparative education is not a branch of science that only analyses the current situation and sheds light on different dimensions in the field it examines. Comparative education, besides comparing the systems it analyses, makes suggestions for the future. It has a quality that influences educational practices by showing the decision makers in the field of education the ways to improve the education system. Finally, it is emphasised that comparative education is not a dry system of copying that adopts a point of view which says that “if A is done, B will happen”, and that it does not bring the education system of a foreign country and apply it in another country (Erdoğan, 2003).

Although the concepts of comparative education and international education are used interchangeably, they are actually two different fields of study (Philips & Schweisfurth, 2006). Comparative education is an interdisciplinary science that uses historical, philosophical, sociological foundations and methods while examining the problems in educational systems from an international perspective. International education, on the other hand, is an approach that brings together students, teachers and scientists from different nations and enables different nations to learn a lot from each other. Comparative education and international education are two fields that complement and need each other, but each is a field in its own right and not a sub-branch of the other.

Goals and Benefits of Comparative Education

The purpose of comparative education can vary depending on who is doing the comparison (Türkoğlu, 1998). Parents compare schools and education systems in order to be able to choose the educational institution that meets the needs of their children. School principals and teachers make comparisons in order to improve the functioning of the institutions in which they work. Those who make decisions to structure education systems analyse education systems in other countries in order to find ways of achieving social or political goals in their own countries. International organisations examine education systems in different countries in order to make more effective recommendations to states and countries. Academics make comparisons to better understand the forces shaping education systems and the impact of education systems on social development (Bray et al., 2007).

- Whoever makes the comparison, the aims of comparative education can be listed as follows (Erdoğan, 2007; Kubow & Fossum, 2007; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006; Türkoğlu, 1998):
- To provide valid information about educational systems, problems and practices,
- To provide the necessary information to develop hypotheses and make interpretations related to education,
- To gain a perspective that will help the formation of educational policies by examining the development and appearance of the factors affecting education in various countries,
- To make theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a country's own education system,
- To broaden the cultural horizons of people and especially educators,
- To ensure that individuals have a broad perspective in the face of a certain educational problem and are open to producing versatile and alternative solutions,
- To reduce international tension by contributing to international understanding and dialogue,
- To adapt the methods, practices and institutions used in other countries in education,
- To obtain information that can help in determining educational policies necessary for national development,
- To determine the nature of the relationship between education and society by analysing the relationship and interaction between different factors affecting education.

As mentioned earlier, comparative education continues to be a field of study that attracts the interest of many researchers. There are many factors that make comparative education such a field of interest. Türkoğlu (1998) lists the reasons why comparative education is a field that attracts the interest

of researchers as universalisation, moving away from single-centred education, the effort to better understand one's own system, communication traffic, national identity or heritage and artnerity.

Universalisation: International mobility and the rise of the media have brought with them the development of information traffic and travelling. This situation has also necessitated the universalisation of professions and professional mobility. At this point, settling and studying in a foreign country, even temporarily, comes to the agenda, and the related educational problems make it necessary to understand the education systems in other countries. Under these circumstances, comparative education becomes an indispensable part of educational sciences.

Moving away from one-centred education: International cooperation requires getting to know the values, habits and cultural identity of a foreigner in order to work comfortably and effectively with him/her. Learning and understanding how other countries approach education, use different educational methods while trying to achieve the same goal, and that schools are not evaluated with the same criteria helps to move away from one-centred education.

An Effort to Better Understand One's Own System: Researchers who analyse the education systems of different countries through comparative education studies have the chance to gain a perspective that will enable them to better understand the education systems in their own countries.

Communication Traffic: Universalisation extends to schools and education systems. Comparative education reveals the similarities and differences between education systems and creates bridges, gateways and affinities between national stakeholders within the education system. It enables communication, fusion and the organisation of mutual interests.

National Identity or Heritage: Every country has an education system to which it adheres, and within this system there is an identity, a heritage. While comparative education confirms the existence of marked differences between national institutions, it emphasises that functional commonalities do not necessarily negate ancestral identity.

Partnership: Comparative education demonstrates that there is nothing to prevent different education systems from coming closer together and fosters partnerships in the field of education. By enabling the journey between education systems, comparative education offers a means of getting to know the other without mixing with it, of coming together with it and yet being different.

Comparative education studies, as mentioned above, have many aims. If these aims are achieved, comparative education studies have various benefits (Erdoğan, 2003; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006). Firstly, it provides information about alternative approaches in education by sensitising about how the theoretical foundations and practical applications in the field of education are in different countries (Afdal, 2019). By analysing different experiences and approaches, it helps education policy makers and administrators to make the best decision in the field of education. It reveals different dimensions of the

relationship between education and national development. It helps to understand the past and present and plays an important role in predicting what the future education system might look like. It provides valid and reliable information about different education systems, showing that the problems of education in any one country are not unique. Schools serve as a model for understanding political changes and pressures in society. At this point, comparative education studies have an important role in recognising the culture, values, successes and failures of other nations (Fairbrother, 2005). The individual information obtained through comparative education prepares the ground for the production of general theories in a broader framework.

Still, there are some critical perspectives to comparative education. Critical perspectives in comparative education challenge traditional approaches by addressing power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and global inequalities embedded in educational systems. A prominent lens is the postcolonial perspective, which examines how colonial histories continue to influence education policies and practices, often privileging Western paradigms while marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems (Tikly, 1999). This perspective critiques the lingering effects of colonialism on global education and advocates for the decolonization of curricula. Similarly, the neoliberal critique focuses on the marketization of education, critiquing the privatization of schools, the commodification of learning, and the emphasis on standardized outcomes over holistic educational goals (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). This perspective underscores how neoliberal policies exacerbate inequalities within and between education systems, raising concerns about equity and access in the globalized education landscape (Brathwaite, 2017). Together, these perspectives call for more inclusive, equitable, and transformative approaches to comparative education.

Historical Development of Comparative Education

Comparative education studies have passed through four basic stages until today (Erdoğan, 2003; Noah & Eckstein, 1969; Rust et al., 2009; Sweeting, 2007; Türkoğlu, 1998; Yıldırım & Türkoğlu, 2018). These stages are listed as follows:

Preparatory Phase (Aristotle-1880)

Formation Phase (1880-1914)

Theory Phase (1914-1940)

Research Phase (1945-2000)

Preparatory Phase (Aristo-1880)

In the first period based on the observations of the travellers of the Antique period, curiosity and interest in the unknown paved the way for studies that would enter the field of comparative education. Herodote and Xenophon can be considered as the pioneers of comparative education. Although the first

comparativists appear from the Antiquity period, which is a mixture of Greek and Roman civilisation, there are also travellers who made comparisons on education in other civilisations. In the 7th century, the Chinese Yi-Tsing described the Nalanda Buddhist University in India; in the 8th century, the Arab seller Suleiman described Chinese education, and in the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun of Tunisia explained the benefits of comparisons between societies.

Although some studies have been carried out to analyse the education system of other countries and societies since the early ages, the efforts to make comparative education a branch of science coincide with the 19th century. Marc Antoine Jullien is regarded as the first comparative educator with his work entitled *A Plan of Study and Prognoses on Comparative Education* published in 1817. The aims and methods of comparative education are included in this book for the first time. Jullien wanted this field to be an experimental and real science, and made efforts in this direction. He proposed to establish a centre in France to organise the world education systems and to study the educational experiences of different countries.

Jullien emphasised the necessity of a systematic approach for comparative research. He underlined that it was necessary to employ methods that allow observation in order to collect the data. In this context, Jullien suggested that two sets of questions can be compared. The first set includes questions on primary, secondary, tertiary, higher, teacher training and girls' education. Under these main headings, sub-headings with different questions are listed as educational organisations, teachers and students, physical education, moral and religious education, general and vocational education, relations between social and family life and school institutions, interdisciplinary coordination and general opinions.

Formation Phase (1880-1914)

During this period, many educational trips to foreign countries were organised. At this stage, the aim was first to learn what was basically done in other countries, and then to discuss whether it was possible to apply interesting techniques and methods to another educational system. During these trips, data on education in other countries were collected and a descriptive catalogue was created.

Among the comparative educators who left their mark on this period were Victor Cousin, a Frenchman who compared German and French education systems; Horace Mann, who travelled to England, Ireland, Scotland, Belgium and France in 1843 and reported his observations; Kruse, a German educator who compared education in France and Germany; and Henry Bernard, who travelled to study Eastern European education systems.

Theory Phase (1914-1940)

In this period, comparative educators tried to explain the qualities of educational systems in terms of the values and conditions of the society in which the educational system developed. In this period,

when the social foundations of education were analysed, the idea of copying an education system exactly began to be abandoned.

Kandel was one of the leading comparative educators of this period. He was the first person to be paid for the comparative education courses he taught. He stated that the first aim of comparative education was not to assimilate but to adapt the methods, practices and organisations used in other countries. He emphasised that the education system could not be studied without taking into account political, social, economic and cultural factors. Another researcher who left his mark on the period was Nicholes Hans. Hans stated that educational studies should bring a certain change and development to the society. He emphasised that language, religion, race, economic and social class factors should be taken into consideration when determining educational policy in a society.

Research Phase (1945-2000)

In this period, educational problems started to be analysed as international educational problems by comparative educators. After the 1950s, international organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, European Union, European Commission started to conduct quantitative studies on different education systems in the world. This statistical data led to the adoption of more objectivity and scientific approach in comparative education research. During this period, it is also possible to mention the Sputnik factor in comparative education. With the launch of the Soviet Union into space in 1957, researchers, especially in the USA, turned towards analysing the education systems of many countries, especially the USSR. This tendency has also revitalised comparative education studies.

Comparative Education Today

Especially during the cold war years, the field, which played a role in recognising rival countries, has now assumed a new mission of developing international understanding and ensuring world peace through education. The main function of education during the cold war years was to provide the equipment and techniques that would enable nations to gain superiority over each other. However, today, the aim is to provide the values and knowledge necessary for individuals who will live in the new world order (Broadfoot, 2000).

Theoretical Basis of Comparative Education

Within the scope of this study, the theories that influence comparative education studies and thus form the basis of these studies are addressed. The framework offers a comprehensive overview by outlining various theoretical approaches. However, since the theories are examined individually, the differences between them are not explored in sufficient detail. In this context, structural functionalist theory, modernisation theory, human capital theory, Marxist theory, dependency theory, emancipation theory, post-modernism and post-structuralism are discussed in this part of the study.

Structural Functionalist Theory

According to the structural functionalist theory, the aim in a society with a unitary structure is to achieve and maintain consensus (Şişman, 1998). This goal is the most important social power. Structural functionalist theory is based on balance and stability (Şahin, 2015). Consensus in society is the most important step towards stability. According to this perspective, society is like a biological organism that focuses on preserving its existence. According to this theory, society has a unitary structure with certain limitations, has a harmonious structure in terms of the relations between the elements within it, and has a stable structure that focuses on maintaining and protecting its existence. According to the structural functionalist theory, change proceeds in a linear fashion as part of the natural development of society and is therefore necessary. At this point, change never means differences and deviations from one state of affairs to another. Therefore, change refers to a manageable process. The structural functionalist theory's emphasis on equilibrium and stability is based on the understanding that social progress takes place in a linear line. However, the complexity of relations in a rapidly globalising world challenges this understanding, because globalisation is not a linear process by its very nature (Şişman, 1998).

Structural functionalist theory has also had reflections on education. Schools adopt many practices to ensure stability and balance. As one of the most important institutions that ensure the socialisation of individuals, schools perform many functions such as following and teaching a certain curriculum or providing students with certain behaviours expected by society (Juvova et al., 2005). From this point of view, schools are institutions that contribute to the balance in society. Therefore, teachers should not perceive their classrooms as just a room in a school building where students of the same age come together to learn a subject. Teachers who adopt the structural functionalist perspective should not forget that their classrooms are places where responsible and productive citizens are raised. They should aim to provide their students with the necessary skills to adapt more easily to the existing social structure. According to this view, the aim of education is to adopt existing social values, not to challenge them.

Modernisation Theory

According to this theory, modern values inherent in society can be nurtured and developed. Human nature, and therefore human behaviour, is not static but variable (Hout, 2016). At this point,

modernisation theory sees social development and individual development as interrelated. Modernisation theory has had its reflections on education. The aim of education is to help realise this aim in societies trying to modernise. Although change is inevitable, a prescription is offered for it. Thanks to the education that individuals will receive on their way to becoming "modern" people, the development of modern institutions and social progress will also be possible. A teacher who fully embraces this theory will understand how closely the development of individuals is related to the development of society. Students who gain certain skills through education will also contribute to the economic development of their countries. The new skills acquired by students actually prepare them for the future. The modernisation of the society will also be realised thanks to the training of good citizens by schools.

Human Capital Theory

In order to understand the theory of human capital, it is useful to examine the development of human history. Human progress has 5 stages (Nafukho et al., 2004; Sezgin, 2015; Tan, 2014). The first stage, the traditional society stage, is the period when agricultural activities were dominant, agricultural products were consumed by producers, and there was a barter-type simple trade. The second stage, the transition period, is the period when surplus production made trade possible, transportation was needed for trade, and commercial entrepreneurship emerged. The third stage, the mobilisation period, is the period when manufacturing activities replaced agricultural activities with industrialisation and the concept of investment emerged. The fourth stage, the transition to maturity, is the period when economic diversity increased from only one or two industries and innovation meant more investment. The fifth stage, mass consumption, is the period when the production of durable industrial goods increased and economic activities in the service sector gained momentum.

The reflections of the human capital theory, which deals with the development of human history with the stages listed above, on education have been very important. Human capital theory, just like modernisation theory, establishes a direct and functional link between education and development (Gillies, 2015). An example of this is the creation of education programmes by taking into account the required labour force. According to this view, teachers should see the connection between education and qualified labour force. The money spent on education is justified because there is a very strong link between education and the development of society.

Marxist Theory

According to the structural functionalist theory, change is a means to ensure balance and stability in the existing society. From a Marxist perspective, change is the replacement of the status quo by a completely different social order (Shaff, 2013). According to Marx, change is the product of conflict, because one group of people exploits another group to protect their own interests (Jessop, 2004).

Although Marx sees society as a unit, he emphasises that there are substructures in society that express different social classes and layers. The bourgeoisie or exploiting class exploits the productive activity of the proletariat, although it does not contribute to the production of goods and services. Therefore, the working class is the exploited class.

Both structural functionalist theory and Marxist theory recognise that social institutions and mechanisms have an instinct to maintain balance and stability in society. However, while structural functionalist theory justifies this instinct, Marxist theory emphasises that the preservation of balance and stability in society is only in the interest of the exploiting class, while the exploited class suffers because of this stability. Marxist theory has some reflections on education. According to this view, education is useful insofar as it facilitates the transition from capitalist to communist society. Industrial and technical education is necessary for human progress. Equality of opportunity in education is vital for individuals belonging to different classes (Hill, 2018).

Dependency Theory

Like Marxist theory, dependency theory argues that social relations have become relations based on exploitation due to capitalism (Mavi, 2020). However, while Marxist theory focuses on the relations between different classes within a country and society, dependency theory focuses on the relations between different countries and societies within the world system. Dependency theory explains global inequality on the North-South axis (Aslan, 2015). While North American and European countries live like a privileged upper class, Latin American and African countries live a life far from prosperity. The class conflict between the privileged bourgeois class and the exploited proletariat in the Marxist perspective manifests itself in the form of exploitation and oppression between countries in dependency theory.

According to the dependency theory, in the capitalist world order, privileged nations are considered as the core, while undeveloped societies are considered as the periphery (Cizreli, 2015). While the centre nations in the dependency theory correspond to Marx's bourgeois class, the marginal nations correspond to the exploited proletariat. Oppression and exploitation do not only exist between centre and marginal nations. As long as the elite in the marginal nations protect their own interests, they can take steps to strengthen the centre/marginal nations relationship in the global system. Centre and marginal countries also have their own substructures of centre and margin, which is in line with Marx's explanation of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Dependency describes a situation in which the economies of certain countries are at the initiative of other countries. The economic capacity and future of the marginal countries are in the hands of the centre countries.

The implications of dependency theory on education are various. In contemporary times, it is expected that teachers assist students in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to the

competition in the global market. Teachers should strategically plan education to enhance their country's competitiveness in the global market. Dependency theory emphasizes that such education, while benefiting one country, also facilitates the exploitation of another (Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Griffiths, 2010).

Emancipation Theory

According to dependency theory, the elite in underdeveloped countries take measures to preserve societal inequalities for their own interests (Pettit, 2001). Emancipation theory aligns with this perspective, emphasizing radical changes in the economic, political, and cultural structure of underdeveloped countries. According to this theory, the purpose of education is to awaken, mobilize, and empower the exploited segments of society in underdeveloped countries. Traditional education inherently harbors its own system of oppression and dichotomy. In this context, the teacher symbolizes authority and power, while the student is the individual subjected to pressure. The goal of education, according to Liberation Theory, should be to enable the self-realization of the oppressed segment, breaking free from the imposed constraints (Ramsay, 2011).

Post-Modernism ve Post-Structuralism

Post-modernism and post-structuralism do not claim to be theories in the same vein as structural functionalism or Marxism. This is because post-modernism and post-structuralism do not envision the possibility of a theory that can comprehensively explain the world in all its facets (Hutcheon, 1987). Consequently, they do not provide specific views or recommendations regarding how schools are or should be. Nevertheless, they advocate against the idea that instructional programs should consist of independent courses and disciplines. Instead, instructional programs should be crafted with an integrative approach, encompassing subjects such as power, history, and social identity (Rikowski & McLaren, 2002). Considering that students' identities are shaped by the interaction of various elements, this diversity and interaction in the program are deemed essential (Tesar et al., 2021). Given that classes comprise students from different cultures and nations, teachers should strive to embrace every segment in the classroom while also ensuring fairness.

Method in Comparative Education

In comparative education, there is neither a singular nor a universally accepted theory and practice embraced by all comparative educators. Approaches and methods in comparative education research vary depending on who is conducting the comparison and under what circumstances the comparison is made (Türkoğlu, 2008). Throughout historical development, researchers have commonly employed the following methods in comparative education studies: Jullien method, historical method, functional analysis method, sociological method / problem analysis method, analytical method: Bereday and Hilker model, quantitative-statistical method, and Bray and Thomas method.

Jullien Method

Jullien's method in comparative education is also defined as experimental deductive or qualitatively semi-ethnographic. The primary objective of this method is to enable each country's educational institutions to identify their strengths and weaknesses through comparisons, leading to the implementation of measures to address shortcomings (Yüksek & Sağlam, 2012, pp. 27-30). Jullien has prepared questionnaires for six educational domains including elementary education, secondary education and classical education, higher education and scientific education, normal education, education for girls/women, and education related to social institutions and laws. Each domain includes subheadings such as sSchools, administrators and teachers, students, physical education and gymnastics, ethics and religious education, measurement methods and exams, education in the family, discipline, punishment and rewards, and general thoughts and questions. The questions in Jullien's survey reflect the characteristics of his era, his educational philosophy, and worldview. The survey, successful in collecting comprehensive and objective data, is still applied today, especially after being updated by UNESCO (Çetin et al., 2017).

Historical Method

This method has been particularly utilized in studies conducted between the First and Second World Wars. Its main advocates are Kandel, Hans, and Ulich. With this method, not only past events related to education but also the evolutionary development of education systems has been identified. Advocates of this method argue that education is highly comprehensive, cannot be expressed solely through numbers, involves numerous influencing factors, and these factors need to be examined (Aynal, 2012, p. 217).

According to Lauwerys, one of the advocates of the method, among the factors directing education systems, there are not only natural factors but also societal factors such as population, race, religion, language, political situation, economic status, and social class. This model, revealing that the social and cultural environment influences education systems, emphasizes the importance of knowing the history of education to understand education systems. Asserting that education systems develop along with the progress of societies, this method highlights the necessity of a historical perspective to comprehend this development and change. The weaknesses of this method include the potential for data to be questionable when care is not taken in data collection and the possibility of historians being biased, concealing negative aspects and emphasizing positive aspects related to their own countries when not impartial.

Functional Analysis Method

Especially utilized in the 1960s and 1970s, this method examines the education system in terms of its contributions to society and the country. The method also investigates the social, political, and

economic functions of schools and teaching (Aynal, 2012, p. 217). It advocates for the examination of the education system alongside social and political institutions. This method is based on scientific, experimental, and quantitative approaches. The relationships between variables are analyzed independently of time. The focus is on the current role of education in social, political, and economic processes.

Sociological / Problem Analysis Method

In comparative education, Holmes, opposing the historical method, argued that comparative education should not be merely a science focused on the past but should also make predictions about the future. In this method developed by Holmes, educational issues are examined in a social context. The primary goal of this method is to investigate an educational problem in conjunction with its appearance, development, and outcomes in the education systems of other countries (Çetin et al., 2017). In this regard, this model asserts that a country's education system is influenced by its social, cultural, economic, political, and religious systems. Therefore, an educational issue is also a societal issue. However, this method has some limitations. Firstly, it confines education within the boundaries of formal education, not considering educational variables such as family, media, and peer groups. It also overlooks the fact that the problem taken as the basis for comparison may not be a problem in all countries.

Analytical Method: Bereday and Hilker Model

Bereday argues that the fundamental purpose of comparative education is the analytical investigation of foreign education systems (Wojniak, 2018). In this method, factors influencing education, which were previously evaluated in other methods, are assessed and compared in detail. It is observed that in English studies, reference is made to Bereday, while in German studies, reference is made to Hilker when discussing this method (Adick, 2018). According to Adick, the truth of the matter is that this method was independently developed through separate studies by these two researchers. Adick emphasizes that this method has four fundamental stages: description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison.

Description: Sources such as written documents, reports, etc., related to the phenomenon under comparison are searched and examined. Observations can be made through visits to educational institutions. The acquired information is then classified.

Interpretation: The phenomenon under comparison is evaluated in terms of historical, economic, social, geographical aspects, etc. During this evaluation, not only the data obtained in the description stage but also the environment in which the compared education systems exist is taken into account.

Juxtaposition: Data from different countries are paired for comparison. After determining the criteria for comparison, differences and similarities in the data obtained in the previous stage are identified. A hypothesis is formulated for comparative analysis.

Comparison: The aim is to present evidence for the acceptability of the formulated hypothesis, thus achieving a consistent and objective conclusion in the research. Therefore, the examined areas are compared repeatedly to ensure a thorough comparative analysis.

Quantitative-Statistical Method

Education data such as the number of students at each educational level, the count of successful and unsuccessful students, the number of teachers, teacher salaries, the number of schools, and the number of laboratories are collected (Çetin et al., 2017). The collected data is then compared with equivalent data from different countries. This comparison allows for reaching a conclusion regarding the level of progress in the country's analyzed field (Demir, 2017). However, this method has some limitations. Firstly, inaccurate results may be obtained if the data is not valid and reliable. Additionally, the existence of unique terms for each country makes standardization challenging. Lastly, the criticism is directed at the method for providing interpretations about the education system solely based on numerical data.

Bray and Thomas Method

This method appears to be a synthesis of approaches and methods used in the 1950s and 1960s, resembling an overview of topics to be examined in comparisons. It serves as an analytical tool for the comparative examination of “who, what, and where” questions.

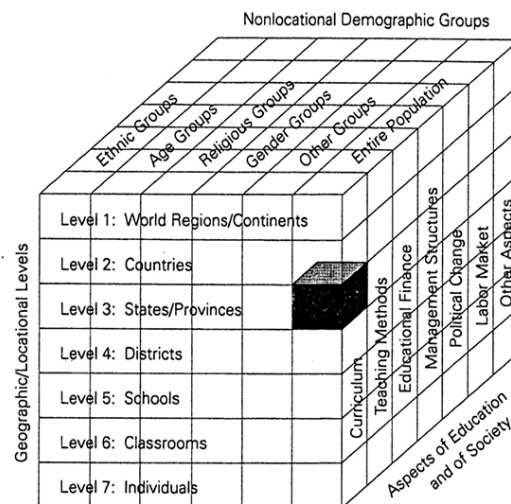


Figure 1. Bray and Thomas Cube

As is seen in Figure 1, in the Bray and Thomas method, the cube that emerges classifies the three dimensions of comparative education (geographical/regional dimension, demographic dimension,

education and society aspect) with various variables. In their studies published in 1995, Bray and Thomas emphasize the necessity of a multi-layered analysis in comparative education for a comprehensive and holistic approach to educational phenomena.

Problems Encountered in Comparative Education Studies

Although comparative education offers a rich and deep insight to education across the globe, it has some possible problems in it. In comparative education studies, any practice in a country can be presented as an exemplary practice. For example, providing the university enrollment rate in a country based on inflated data from widespread education and portraying that country as being more advanced in terms of universities is an illustration of this issue (Erdoğan, 2003; Sel, 2004). At the end of comparative education studies, judgments can be made based solely on specific outcomes. For example, evaluating the academic performance of students in a country based solely on the grades they receive from certain tests is an example of this. However, comparative education should not rely solely on the language of outcomes.

Another risk is that from the selection of the subject to be examined, the method to be applied, and the interpretation of research results, an ethnocentric perspective can be adopted at many points (Phillip, 2006). Taking a phenomenon that is a problem in our own society as a problem for another society is an example of this. Achieving consensus on education terms and concepts can be challenging. For instance, the terms and durations of basic education, primary education, and elementary school are used differently in different countries. Collecting valid and reliable statistical data can be challenging. Knowing the language of the country being compared or having a good understanding of sources written in the language of that country is essential for accurate interpretation.

Comparative Education in Türkiye

Comparative education studies in Turkey trace back to the Ottoman era. Hoca İshak Efendi, sent to Paris to examine military and administrative affairs in France, implemented the program of French military schools precisely at the Mühendishane-i Berri-i Humayun. Thinkers like Ali Suavi, Namık Kemal, and İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu examined the education systems of European countries to enhance the education system (Türkoğlu, 1998). Then, in the early years of the Republic, educators such as John Dewey and Omar Buyse were invited to Turkey to reform education and prepared various reports. After the 1950s, close relations were established with international organizations, and educators and bureaucrats were sent abroad to examine the education systems of different countries. The first comparative education course was offered at Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences in 1969 by British Professor Lauwerys. The lecture notes given by Lauwerys were compiled in 1971 and published in book form by Prof. Dr. Fatma Varış.

In the 1970s, Prof. Dr. Kemal Aytaç established the “Comparative Education Research Institute” at Ankara University Faculty of Language, History, and Geography. Prof. Dr. Kemal Aytaç’s works, such as *Contemporary Education Movements and European School Reforms*, and his translation titled *A Study Plan and Preliminary Views on Comparative Education*, are among the early works in the field. The first doctoral dissertation in the field of comparative education in Turkey was conducted by Adil Türkoğlu in 1977, titled *A Comparison of High School Programs in Turkey and France*. Another significant contribution to the field was made by Adil Türkoğlu in 1985, with a work that examined the education systems of France, Switzerland, and Romania. Today, it is an area of research that attracts the attention of many researchers in the field.

Today, exams such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS are important tools for comparing and analyzing education across countries. By participating in these international exams, Türkiye analyzes its current local education system according to international standards, identifies deficiencies and areas needing improvement, and works on addressing them. In this context, Turkey began participating in TIMSS, which takes place every four years, in 1999 (MEB, 2019); PIRLS, conducted every five years, in 2001 (MEB, 2022); and PISA, held every three years, in 2003 (MEB, 2023). While these exams are highlighted for their positive contributions to understanding regional disparities in education and addressing inequalities in the education system (Altun, 2019), it is also argued that the reform initiatives undertaken to address these deficiencies have remained superficial and that focusing on the results of these exams is far from resolving the deep-rooted issues of the Turkish education system (Yelken, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The exploration of comparative education reveals a nuanced and evolving field with profound implications for educational development globally. The historical trajectory, from early endeavors in the Ottoman era to the establishment of dedicated research institutes in modern times, underscores the enduring importance of cross-cultural perspectives in shaping educational policies and practices (Türkoğlu, 1998; Adick, 2018).

The literature has shown that the methods employed in comparative education research are diverse, reflecting the complexity of educational systems and the multifaceted nature of the field. Jullien’s method, historical analysis, functional analysis, and sociological inquiry, among others, provide researchers with a rich toolkit to examine educational phenomena from various angles (Çetin, Korkmaz & Öner, 2017; Yüksek & Sağlam, 2012). The eclectic nature of these methods highlights the need for flexibility and adaptability in approaching the intricacies of comparative education. Theories such as dependency theory and liberation theory contribute theoretical frameworks to understand the social, economic, and political dimensions of education in different contexts. The post-modernist perspective, while not offering a prescriptive theory, emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse perspectives and narratives in educational discourse (Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Pettit, 2001; Ramsay,

2011). These theories, though distinct, collectively enrich the analytical lens through which comparative education researchers can interpret and contextualize their findings.

The discussion within comparative education literature often revolves around the methodological and theoretical challenges inherent in cross-national comparisons. While some scholars argue for the necessity of standardized measures for meaningful comparisons (Bray & Thomas, 1995), others caution against oversimplification and emphasize the need for cultural sensitivity (Tuijnman, 1996). The ongoing dialogue reflects the ongoing tension between the pursuit of universal insights and the acknowledgment of contextual nuances. Furthermore, the application of theories such as dependency and liberation theory necessitate careful consideration of power dynamics and cultural contexts. Dependency theory, which highlights the potential exploitation within global educational systems, prompts critical reflections on educational policies that may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities. On the other hand, liberation theory advocates for transformative education to empower marginalized communities, urging educators and policymakers to consider the socio-cultural dimensions of learning (Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Pettit, 2001; Ramsay, 2011).

As we navigate the complexities of comparative education, it is crucial to recognize the dynamic nature of educational systems and the evolving socio-cultural landscapes. The integration of post-modernist perspectives, advocating for a holistic and interconnected curriculum, underscores the importance of embracing diversity and fostering inclusive educational environments (Rikowski & McLaren, 2002).

Future research in comparative education would benefit from fostering collaboration across disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology, and technology. A multidisciplinary approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing educational systems. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of educational systems over extended periods would contribute valuable insights. Such studies can capture the dynamic nature of reforms, policy implementations, and societal changes, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the impact of time on educational outcomes. A balanced integration of qualitative and quantitative methods can enhance the depth and breadth of comparative education research. While quantitative data offers statistical insights, qualitative approaches provide rich contextual understanding. A mixed-methods approach can generate more robust and nuanced findings. The rapid advancements in technology and pedagogical approaches necessitate ongoing exploration. Investigating how different countries incorporate technology in education, implement innovative pedagogies, and adapt to changing learning environments can provide insights into effective practices and potential challenges.

Exploring how educational policies impact marginalized communities, examining disparities in access to quality education, and identifying strategies for fostering inclusivity can contribute to more equitable global educational systems. With the increasing interconnectedness of societies, there is a

growing need for cross-cultural teacher training. Research focusing on effective strategies for preparing educators to work in culturally diverse settings can enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences. Given the global focus on sustainability, future research in comparative education should explore the integration of environmental and sustainability education. Investigating how different countries incorporate ecological literacy into their curricula can contribute to a more environmentally conscious and responsible global citizenry. Comparative education scholars should actively engage with policymakers, international organizations, and educational institutions to translate research findings into actionable policy recommendations. Collaboration between researchers and policymakers can facilitate evidence-based decision-making and enhance the impact of comparative education research on global educational practices. Promoting international exchanges for educators can provide firsthand experiences of different educational systems. By embracing these suggestions, the field of comparative education can advance its contributions to global educational discourse, offering practical insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers alike.

A critical analysis of the literature reveals several limitations and gaps that warrant further discussion. While the existing body of research provides valuable insights into the methodologies and theories employed in comparative education, it often lacks a thorough examination of their limitations and the contextual factors that may influence their application. For instance, the methods used in comparative education research, although diverse, are not always adaptable to the unique challenges posed by specific educational contexts. The reliance on standardized measures for cross-national comparisons may overlook the nuances of local cultures and educational systems, leading to potential oversimplifications. Additionally, while theories such as dependency and liberation theory offer important frameworks, their application in diverse global contexts can be problematic, as these theories often fail to account for the complexities of local power dynamics and socio-political realities. The literature also tends to focus on broader theoretical discussions, with limited attention given to empirical research that explores the actual implementation of comparative education theories in practice. Therefore, future research should address these gaps by critically engaging with the limitations of existing methods and theories, exploring the practical challenges of applying them in real-world settings, and considering the implications for more equitable and inclusive educational practices globally.

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