CERC Studies in Comparative Education


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Crafting a Global Field
Six Decades of the Comparative and International Education Society

Edited by Erwin H. Epstein

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The Oral History Project: Comparatively Speaking I and II

Gita Steiner-Khamsi

Just in time for the 50th anniversary of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), the video *Comparatively Speaking: An Oral History of the First 50 Years of the Comparative and International Education Society* was released. Victor Kobayashi scheduled the premiere screening for the annual conference that he, as CIES President-Elect, had organized in Honolulu. A few weeks later, he sent a letter to the past presidents of the CIES (dated 24 April 2006) that succinctly summarized the content of the video:

It features interviews with 25 past presidents of the Society conducted by faculty and doctoral students in the field. Starting with R. Freeman Butts (1964) and ending with Steven Klees (2007), the video traces the history and scholarly debates from its fragile inception to its current strength and growth.

In effect, *Comparatively Speaking* was the oral history project of the Society in that it gathered historical accounts on the debates and developments in comparative and international education, as told by elected leaders in the field. The video was sponsored by CIES and Teachers College (TC), Columbia University. Two individuals were instrumental in assisting me with production. Eric M. Johnson, at the time a doctoral student in International and Comparative Education, spent many hours with me, including his winter semester break 2005/06, brainstorming how to reduce over 33 hours of video-recorded interviews into a meaningful, coherent and interesting 73-minute video. At every step of the process we had the guidance of a professional video-producer. Wairimu Kambuthi had already completed her dissertation and later became a successful film director and video producer. She was able to masterfully bridge the two worlds of academia and the media community: capturing the debate culture of academics and producing a video that satisfies professional and technical standards.

Context

Teachers College, Columbia University is generally acknowledged as being the birthplace for the formal academic study of comparative education. The first comparative-education course was taught by James Earl Russell in 1899 (Bereday 1963). Russell was not only the first faculty member to teach a course entitled "Comparative Education" but he was also the first dean (later president) of the College. Even better for the stature of comparative education at TC, James Earl Russell was succeeded by his son William Fletcher Russell, who upon his retirement as President of TC in 1954, assumed a high post in the International Cooperation Administration. That agency eventually merged into the newly established U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which was engaged in international education activity. For this reason, the history of comparative education and the history of TC are inextricably linked.

There is a long and illustrious history of faculty and alumni who helped professionalize teaching and research in comparative education, both in the United States and internationally: Paul Monroe established the International Institute of Education in 1923, Isaac L. Kandel launched the series *International Yearbook of Education* in 1924 and served as its editor for 20 years, and George Z.F. Bereday was the founding editor of the flagship journal *Comparative Education Review* and, together with Joseph Lauwerys, the founding editor of the book series *World Yearbook of Education* (Routledge) in 1965. Finally, several faculty members (David G. Scanlon, R. Freeman Butts, Harold J. Noah, Henry M. Levin, Gita Steiner-Khamsi) and distinguished alumni of TC (Max A. Eckstein, Rolland Paulston, Noah Sobe) have served as CIES presidents and helped to grow the membership, visibility, and professional credibility of the Society. Given Teachers College’s legacy in the field, it took little persuasion to
enlist the support of the administration for co-sponsoring the CIES oral history project.

Several elements help professionalize a field, including structures that allow professionals to be trained, meet, publish, and exchange professional knowledge (see the chapter by Wiseman and Matherly in this volume). Professional associations are then charged by their members to organize such venues, bearing in mind the interests of members. Relevant structures are, for example, courses or degree programs in comparative and international education, book series or journals such as Comparative Education Review, Current Issues in Comparative Education, Compare, Comparative Education, and Research in Comparative and International Education, as well as networks and meetings such as the annual CIES conferences. My generation of comparative and international education scholars in the United States experienced over the past 20 years a boom in degree programs, publications, and initiatives. Attendance at the annual CIES conferences grew from a handful of professors in 1956 to a few hundred in the 1990s to almost 3,000 professors, practitioners, and graduate students in 2015. In view of this growth, it is relevant to ask what constitutes professional knowledge, what knowledge is essential for comparative and international education research, or to put it more bluntly: what binds us?

**Comparatively Speaking I**

The issue of canon, or perhaps more broadly, the question of a common intellectual ground, motivated me to dig deeper and embark on the oral history project. Is there a “canon” of comparative and international education knowledge? That is, is there a body of literature that every student of comparative and international education must learn regardless of theoretical-methodological orientation or geographical location of the degree program in which the student is studying? Erwin H. Epstein brought up the canon question periodically and prominently in CIES (see especially Epstein 2008). One of the goals that I pursued with the video project was to bring to life the Society’s common past and document the contemporary debates, that is, both agreements and disagreements.

The canon question has become an empirical question. In the era of digital technologies (e.g., Google Scholar) and social network analyses (e.g., bibliographical network analyses), the perennial canon question of what should be read may at long last be resolved by examining what is read. If one were to carry out a bibliographical network analysis of publications written by comparativists and investigate who is reading or who is citing, one would most likely find that there are quite a few clusters within the comparativist networks. Each of these clusters, at times coinciding with the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of CIES and at other times cutting across several SIGs, constitutes its own epistemological community. In other words, there is not one body of Great Books and articles in comparative and international education but several shelves or clusters. The combination of these diverse clusters could then be loosely labeled “professional knowledge” or “comparative and international education knowledge”.

Keeping in mind the broader canon question, we were hoping that agreements and disagreements among the CIES presidents would come to light by asking them the same set of so-called “sample questions.” Eric Johnson and I saw it then as our task to edit the video in ways that reflected the areas of agreement and disagreement among the CIES presidents. We wanted the video to span across three generations of scholars: the past CIES presidents, their younger-generation peers or colleagues, and their students. We therefore asked the CIES presidents to select interviewees at their own universities that were either peers or students (three of the interviewers – Gita Steiner-Khamisi, Karen Mundy, and Noah Sobe – were later elected as presidents of CIES).

The following is a list of the sample questions:

1. Were there any specific external events (political, social, economic) that have shaped the field of comparative and international education during your presidency?
2. In which direction did you want to see the CIES develop? Did you, as a president, pursue a specific mission or vision for the Society?
3. In retrospect, do you think that CIES neglected (or was insensitive to) important developments in the field, and in academe?
4. In your opinion, what should be the relation between comparative education and international educational development or development studies in education?
5. In your opinion, what should be the role of governmental organizations (e.g., USAID), non-governmental organizations (e.g., Save the Children, Soros Foundation), multi-
laterals (UNICEF, UNESCO, etc.) and international financial institutions (World Bank, Inter-American Bank, etc.) in CIES?
6. Is there a body of academic literature that you would consider “comparative and international education literature”? Is there, and should there be a canon in comparative and international education. Are there “great” books in comparative education? If yes, which books should everyone in comparative and international education read?
7. In which direction did the field of comparative and international education develop over the past 50 years (with regards to methods, theories, practice fields, and people)? What was positive, what was negative about this development?
8. What advice would you give new scholars in comparative and international education?
9. If you were a CIES president today, in which direction would you want to see CIES develop?
10. What was the highlight during your presidency? What event is memorable to you?

The next two sections present first a few textual excerpts from the video, Comparatively Speaking I, on agreements, labeled “the common past,” and then highlight a few issues where CIES presidents expressed diverse views, reflecting the different trajectories that exist in the present.

The Common Past
When asked about important historical events that had shaped the field (question 1) and about issues that CIES had neglected in the past (question 3), the presidents agreed on two facts: (i) the emergence of development studies at the height of the Cold War in the late 1950s and the 1960s, and (ii) the underrepresentation of women and ethnic/racial minorities in the early days of the CIES leadership. Indeed, the first 20 presidents of the Society (1957-1976) were men, and it took another 12 years for a person of color (Beverly Lindsay) to stand for, and be elected, President of CIES in 1988. Over the past 10 years, that is, the period 2006-2016, five of the 10 presidents have been female.

The following provides a glimpse into the first point of assertion: the development and area studies turn in comparative education. In the United States, the shift from comparing educational systems in “industrialized nations” to working in developing countries coincided with, and more accurately was a response to, the period of de-colonization and the Cold War. Situated at one pole was the USA and its allied countries of the First World and at the other pole the Soviet Union and its Second World allies. Both superpowers entered into an international race over winning the hearts and minds of the people in the non-aligned former colonies, at the time sometimes referred to as the “Third World.” By the end of the 1960s, the turn was also reflected in the name change of the Society in 1968 from the Comparative Education Society (CES) to the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES).

Two past presidents, R. Freeman Butts (1911-2010) and Rolland Paulston (1930-2006), were in fragile health at the time of the video project, but we managed to locate earlier recordings in which they had spoken about the developments of the field. A graduate of Teachers College, an out-of-the-box thinker, a dear friend and informal mentor to me, Rolland Paulston, passed away a few weeks before the 2006 CIES conference, unable to commemorate with us the 50th CIES anniversary. The oldest interviewed president was R. Freeman Butts (President, 1964) who in 2010 passed away at the age of 99. This is how Butts recalled the early days of international education:

I was on the faculty of Teachers College from 1935 to 1975. First, I was mainly teaching the history of education until 1955. This was just about the time when Teachers College began to get both feet into the international education field, called “technical assistance” at the time. A contract was signed with Afghanistan in 1965.... The project went on from 1955 until the Communists took over in 1979. In the late 60s, the Government began to cut down on technical assistance, especially in education. The international exchange and the education side of the operations began to decline. But we at Teachers College were determined to keep it alive.

Several presidents commented on the period of the National Defense Act (1958) that brought an influx of U.S. federal funding to universities for area and development studies as well as for education exchange programs with developing countries. Given the larger political agenda of “technical assistance,” notably re-entry into the decolonized world and winning the Cold War in developing countries, funding for establishing international education programs in the United States was attacked as “academic colonialism” and criticized as “CIA money.” In fact, John Weidman (University of Pittsburgh) bluntly asked President Donald K.
Adams (1965) the question: “I am wondering whether it was in the 60s when academics started to serve as spies, or did that come a bit later?” Adams replied: “There was an inkling of that at the time. But that came a bit later.” Adams continued:

In many regards we profited from the Cold War ... The Russians put up Sputnik and money came flowing in for a lot of international education programs. I directed two programs that were at the time directly funded from the government: first at the Peabody College at Vanderbilt and then at Syracuse.

During the 1960s, a great number of international education programs were established. Harold J. Noah (President, 1973) explained how at Teachers College the established field of comparative education rapidly went out of fashion and was ridiculed as bookish and Euro-centric. He furthermore observed that comparative education increasingly became impoverished compared to its younger sibling, international educational development, which received all the funds, and as a corollary, all the students and all new faculty lines. Reflecting on the same period, two of the past presidents, Joseph P. Farrell (President, 1977) and Rolland Paulston (President, 1975), provided accounts of how they were able to fund their studies with the help of these government scholarships.

We both joined hands and went to Peru to be part of the Teachers College team in the Ministry of Education. We didn’t know much about Peru. We had to go to the library and read books about Peru. But yet we were sent as instant experts to reform the Peruvian educational system. The assumption was that we use the model of the American educational system. Actually, you take the ideal, not just the model but the ideal, and then you subtract the Peruvian practices. The difference is then the “aid project.” You know, we could play that game too! (Rolland G. Paulston)

The same generation as Paulston, Joseph P. Farrell also studied at a time when scholarships were readily available for studies in international education. He explained how graduates of international education or development studies in education revamped the field of comparative education in the 1960s:

The field at the time was history-oriented and Euro-centric ... At the same time ... there emerged a whole new generation of young scholars that was trained under Ford Foundation money or had National Defense Education Act scholarships in the 60s. They were development specialists and all of them did field work or Peace Corps.... They were the new “Young Turks” of the field. (Joseph P. Farrell)

Many other presidents also made noteworthy statements about important historical events that shaped their year of the presidency (sample question 1). Only a few are mentioned here: the end of Apartheid in South Africa (Masemann, President, 1989), the fall of the Berlin Wall (Heyneman, President, 1992), “the fact that Asia [China and India] was rising” (Hayhoe, President, 1999), the bombing of the World Trade Center (Ross, President, 2001), and the War on Terror (Freeman, President, 2003).

The Trajectories of the Present

The oral history project also brought back to the surface several contested themes and intellectual debates. For reasons of length, I mention only two here: (i) What should count as comparison? (ii) What is the qualification framework for degree programs in comparative and international education?

First-generation CIES presidents Harold J. Noah and Max Eckstein observed that comparative education scholars ceased to produce foundational studies that would allow them to advance theory or make generalizations across a vast array of contexts or countries. To their dismay, the majority of articles to this day published in journals of the field have been one-country studies with little explanatory power for other contexts or countries. Perhaps one of the most articulate in the group of past CIES presidents, who was 80 at the time of the interview, Harold J. Noah (President, 1973), summarized his call for more cross-national studies as follows:

Obviously, the 35 years since 1970 has seen tremendous organizational growth [in U.S. comparative and international education]. Now, I will not speak at all; my lips are sealed on whether there has been qualitative improvement. There certainly are differences.... It is just very different in one way, but very much the same in another way. There are still, as there were before, lots and lots of single-country studies. And the big question always is: Is that comparative education? Couldn’t
these studies just as well have been published in a society of education journal in *that* country, a political science journal in *that* country, or in an educational journal in *that* country? Why is this comparative education? That question still worries me.

Surprisingly, with the exception of Steven Klees (President, 2007), who critically observed the advance of quasi-experimental design, no other CIES president commented on comparison as a method. It is noticeable how, with a few exceptions, methodological questions are neglected in the journals and at professional conferences. Many of those discussions center more narrowly on issues related to indicator research. Based on the publications and presentations of CIES members, it appears fair to state that there is, to use a term coined by Rolland Paulston, “heterodoxy” in terms of comparative method and theories (Paulston 1993), ranging from one-country studies that have little ambition to generalize to cross-national comparison that minimally attempt to understand context.

Another point of contestation has to do with the scope of knowledge and skills, that is, the qualification standard, of future scholars and practitioners in comparative and international education: how specialized should their qualifications be? What knowledge and skills are essential for the profession? Should one advocate for a stand-alone specialist degree in comparative and international education or should the comparative study of education, or development work, only be part of a larger degree program in education, development studies, or policy studies?

The following two views on this issue that were diametrically opposed: Martin Carnoy advised the next generation of scholars to acquire discipline-based knowledge, do field work, and become an area specialist. Martin Carnoy (President, 2005) opined:

One advice that I tell new scholars is that they are coming into an important and growing field. A second piece of advice is that they should devote some time in their study, perhaps as a minor, in a social science discipline. A third one, listen carefully to what people with different methodological approaches have to say. And a final one: spend a lot of time in the field, observe and interpret what is going on. Do not do things from a distance.

In stark contrast are the statements made by Stephen Heyneman (President, 1992), who warned the next generation of scholars of becoming too “ghettoized” and “pigeon-holed” as “development specialists only” and suggested that they instead do analytical work on educational problems regardless of whether it is “in Minnesota or in Malawi,” or “in China or Chicago.”

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the question of “what binds us?” has been intriguing. Having a distinct ancestry and a common past, which the oral history project helped to (re-)construct, and at the same time promoting a climate of agreeing to disagree, is what the debate culture in CIES stands for. Steven Klees (President, 2007) elegantly wrapped up his advice to new scholars in ways that takes into account the various viewpoints, theoretical positions, and diverse methods of inquiry in the CIES community: “Understand the debates in our field. Recognize that there are no right or wrong positions.”

**Outlook of Comparatively Speaking II**

In 2014, CIES President Karen Mundy approached me to produce a sequel to the first oral history project, tentatively entitled *Comparatively Speaking II*. The second video covers the next 10 years of the Society, 2006-2016. As before, I have worked with a team of experts from Teachers College, Columbia University, notably with Whitney Warner and Sheila Matsuda (M.A. students in the program International and Comparative Education) and Hua-Chu Yen, media specialist and professional video-producer. Different from the first oral history project, however, I expanded the range of voices reflecting the current trends and composition in the Society.

The main cast of characters still consists of CIES presidents, namely ones that were elected over the period 2006-2016, starting with Victor Kobayashi (President in 2006) and ending with Noah Soebe (due to become President in 2017). We also included other important voices that comment on developments in the profession of the past 10 years, such as representatives from agencies, think tanks, and philanthropy. In addition, we were able to record during the CIES 2015 conference and capture some of the diverse networks, and also the lively debates in our Society and profession.
Notes
1 William deJong-Lambert and I guest-edited two special issues (2006/07) of the journal *European Education* devoted to an analysis of the 1960s development turn in comparative education. The two special issues 38(3) and 38(4), entitled Post-Cold War Studies in Education, provided a historical account of the growth of "Third World" and development studies in education against the backdrop of the Cold War. We released the publication for the 50th anniversary of CIES, because we believed that this connection was not sufficiently told.
2 More recently, there has been heated debate on the inflationary use of quasi-experimental designs or randomized control trials in comparative education (See Burde 2012). However, most panels during CIES conferences that address methodological issues deal with international learning assessments or cross-national comparisons. Many of those discussions center more narrowly on issues related to indicator research.

References

16
CIEclopedia: Profiling Distinguished Society Leaders

Maria MANZON

CIEclopedia is a who’s who website database for comparative and international education. It was established in 2006 as an initiative of Teachers College, Columbia University. The project was supported by the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and was launched on the occasion of the Society’s 50th anniversary celebrations. This chapter explores the nexus between *CIEclopedia* and CIES leadership. It commences with a brief introduction on the nature and role of who’s who publications. It then gives a history of *CIEclopedia*, explores developments over time, and takes stock of achievements after a decade of existence. Finally, it focuses on profiles of CIES leaders featured in *CIEclopedia* and analyzes variations in the way these biographees have viewed themselves to be an integral part of the Society. The chapter draws on oral histories, the author’s experience as a participant in the project since its early stages, and the actual database. It argues that *CIEclopedia* is not only a medium to portray the distinguished leaders of CIES and others but also one more testimony of CIES’ leadership in pioneering meaningful initiatives to professionalize the global field of comparative education.

‘Who’s who’ refers to a list or directory of facts about notable people (see www.oxforddicctionaries.com). The oldest known publication of this genre is the annual British publication *Who’s Who*, which describes itself as “the essential directory of the noteworthy and influential in all walks of life, in the UK and worldwide, published annually since 1849” (see www.ukwhoswho.com). Another significant and longstanding publica-

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