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Leona M. English

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essentially homogenous society to encompass the notion of social justice in, and the "enrichment" of, a plural society; it culminates in an overtly political interpretation of community education as a means of challenging and changing existing structures. A "Psychological-Sociological" discourse shifts its emphasis from the individual as consumer of educational provision for personal growth to the education of individuals for the "betterment" of particular groups, and finally to the whole group rather than the individual as the locus of educational development. The third discourse, "Geographical-Ecological," moves from the specifics of place into the more abstract notion of lifestyle and ultimately encompasses the "unplace" of the symbolic dimensions of community.

Absent from these discourses is any reference to the spiritual dimensions of community which inspired many early developments in the field. Given the expanding nature of the discourses, however, and renewed interests in spirituality as an aspect of adult learning, the ground is ripe for new understandings of community education.

See also: community development, comparative adult education, environmental adult education, extension, folk high schools, informal learning, libraries, popular education, voluntary organizations, women's voluntary organizations.

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Cheryl Hunt

Comparative Adult Education

Comparative adult education (CAE) describes a scholarly approach to understanding adult education, in which two or more aspects are compared. "Comparison" methodically identifies similarities and differences between the aspects under study; their significance for theory and practice should be explained.

This general definition needs two additional specifications:

1. Although comparison within a single country (intra-national)

can occur, the term mostly – in North America as well as in Europe – stands for "international comparative adult education," meaning the comparison between two or more countries.

2. Also, many types of international comparative research do not include explicit comparison: "It is generally accepted that most of what is included under the rubric of comparative studies in adult education . . . does not include comparison in the strict sense" (Titmus, 1999, p. 36). Perhaps in these cases "comparison" refers to the implicit comparison with one's own country that inevitably happens when analysing a foreign country.

Why International Comparison?

A first reason is *knowledge and understanding* – to become better informed about adult education in other countries, its historical, societal, and cultural roots, "and thus to develop criteria for assessing contemporary developments and testing possible outcomes" (Kidd, 1975, p. 7). This understanding reflects back to one's own country: Observations made in a foreign context help to better perceive and understand adult education not only in the other, but also in one's own country.

A practical reason for international comparison is "*borrowing*": it is hoped that learning from experiences abroad helps to adapt foreign experiences to one's own practice, avoids repeating mistakes and "reinventing the wheel." On a theoretical level it is argued that the international-comparative perspective assists to *overcome one's own ethnocentric blindness*: international comparison helps "to better understand oneself, and to reveal how one's own cultural biases and personal attributes affect one's judgment" (Kidd, 1975, p. 7).

And it is expected that learning from each other supports *peace and tolerance*: "One of the foremost challenges of our age is . . . to construct a culture of peace based on justice and tolerance within which dialogue, mutual recognition and negotiation will replace violence, in homes and countries, within nations and between countries" (UNESCO, *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education*, 1997, chapter 14).

In smaller countries it is certainly easier to experience international knowledge, understanding, and respect through everyday experiences. For the United States of America, spanning an entire continent and having armed forces, business presence, and cultural influence all over the world, this is more difficult.

The International Interest in Andragogy

In the history of adult education and andragogy we find a continuous interest in adult education in other countries. In the century between the lives of Grundtvig (Denmark) and Freire (Brazil) a number of names and ideas attained international currency. The Danish "Folkehojskole," the English university extension movement, the Swedish study circle, and the American encounter-group movement became models for adult education in other countries; often the differences between the "borrowed" and the original have not been perceived.

International travel and exchange has, from the early years, offered key-persons in the adult education movement an important way to shape their understanding: Lindeman (USA) traveled to Germany, Mansbridge (Great

Britain) to Australia and Canada, and Borinski (Germany) to Scandinavia. And conferences have also contributed to the international exchange: At the first conference of the World Council for Comparative Education 1960 in Ottawa, Alexander N. Charters, Professor of Adult Education at Syracuse University, New York, and Roby Kidd, Canadian expert and scholar, conferred in a working group on international and comparative adult education. In 1966 the legendary Exeter conference took place in New Hampshire; the "Exeter papers" were published by the Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education. In 1970 Alexander Charters and Beverly Cassara, Professor at the University of District of Columbia, published the papers from the World Council of Comparative and International Education in Montreal. In Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1992, Colin Titmus, Great Britain, leading researcher in this field, chaired a working group at the VIIIth World Council of Comparative Education Societies. The 1993 conference "Rethinking Adult Education for Development" assembled the comparativists in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Hamburg, Germany, hosted the UNESCO CONFINTEA V Conference in 1997, and the International Society for Adult Comparative Education (ISCAE) held its 2002 conference in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, in conjunction with the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) and the International Association of Adult Education.

These examples indicate that in many countries an international interest occurs in adult education. Certainly, cultural differences limit the transfer from one country to another. Comparative research, by helping to understand the differences and similarities among countries and their significance for adult education, clarifies the possibilities and limits of understanding and borrowing.

Types of International Comparative Adult Education

Knowledge about the education of adults in other countries can be gained from various sources, and several types of comparative research can be categorized. A first, "pre-scientific" source is the reports given by international travelers, mostly characterized as "subjective-impressionistic." More systematic descriptions are categorized as "travelers' reports" and less systematic "travelers' tales." Their value is debatable. Because of random observation and subjective description, it is not clear how reliable and how representative the descriptions are. On the other hand, the plea is made that just this subjective focus of eye witnesses can mean a specific strength.

At the scientific level, six different types of international-comparative research are identified:

- The first is country reports, which try to describe the system of adult education in one country, as proposed, for example, at the 1966 Exeter conference: "to identify and describe the existing adult education programs within each country in order to make the relevant data available to scholars in their own and in other countries for comparative analysis" (Charters & Siddiqui, 1989, p. 3). Country reports were presented mainly during the 1970s and 1980s; some are rather impressionistic, others follow a well-developed outline and structure.
- The second is program reports, or topic-oriented studies. During

and after the 1980s an increasing number of program reports can be found. Because attempts to describe a whole national system were seldom successful, this type focuses on descriptions of adult education programs, institutions, and organizations in a distinct country. Included in this category (sometimes categorized separately) are the *topic-oriented studies* or the *problem approach*, where not a program, but a certain topic or problem is discussed in the context of a nation. These reports/studies are more "international" and less "comparative." Because only one country or program is presented, no comparable object is available; the readers have to draw the comparative conclusions themselves.

- The third, juxtaposition, collects and presents data from two or more countries, but no explicit comparison is given. Statistical reports represent this type, as well as collections of country reports (for example Jarvis, 1992). Juxtaposition can also be topic- or problem-oriented when a topic is discussed in relation to various countries. For example, Pöggeler's (1990) *The State and Adult Education*, brings together articles discussing the role of the state in different countries.
- The fourth is comparison, in the strict understanding of "international comparative adult education" reports from two or more countries, and offers an explicit comparison making the similarities and differences understandable:

> A study in comparative international adult education . . . must include one or more aspects of adult education in two or more countries or regions. Comparative study is not the mere placing side by side of data . . . such juxtaposition is only the prerequisite for comparison. At the next stage one attempts to identify the similarities and differences between the aspects under study . . . The real value of comparative study emerges only from . . . the attempt to understand why the differences and similarities occur and what their significance is for adult education in the countries under examination (Charters & Hilton, 1989, p. 3)

- The fifth, field- and method-reflecting text, reflects the methods, strategies, and concepts of international comparison, and includes summarizing reports about developments in the international comparative field on a material or meta level. The article at hand is an example for this category.
- Finally, there are the reports from international organizations. A bit outside of this system, but still counted as part of the international tradition, are reports from transnational institutions such as UNESCO, OECD, or the World Bank. Joachim Knoll, Professor (emeritus) at Bochum University, Germany, is one of the key persons supplying such information.

Difficulties and Problems of International Comparative Work

One problem is that the continuity of scholarly work is not guaranteed. Only a small number of scholars work in international comparative adult education as their main field; others enter for only a short period of time. The knowledge developed in

comparative adult education is spread over many places, languages, and countries, which makes it difficult for new researchers to start working in this field. To build up continuity it is necessary to bring together the knowledge, experiences, discussions, and standards of the "why" and "how" of international comparison so that researchers can refer to and build upon an internationally shared set of research methods. To serve the continuity in this field through networking, conferences, and publications, the International Society for Comparative Adult Education ISCAE (www.ISCAE.org) was founded.

Often discussed is how comparison can be done between *different cultures*: are researchers knowledgeable enough to understand the aspects under study in a foreign cultural context? This can be a problem especially for American researchers who typically lack international experience. But the reality of international comparative studies shows that this problem can be reduced when the aim is not "perfect" but "better" understanding, and when the work is carried out in dialogue with foreign partners for communicative validation (Knox, 1993).

A clear handicap is *language*. International communication takes place in English, yet for the majority of the world this is a foreign language. Communicating – and even more, publishing – in this foreign language takes many times more effort than in one's native context. English literature is often not available, and it makes no sense to refer to non-English research literature, because the latter does not exist for the international readership. Researchers from non-English countries, when working in the international context, lose most of their scholarly background – theory, methodology, and content – that is based on their native language. On the other hand, native English speakers with no command of a foreign language always depend on more or less reliable translations.

Another problem is the regular *attendance at central international meetings*. To enter this field and to stay in its networks entails traveling and being visible. This is difficult, especially for junior scholars. International comparative projects have *higher costs* and *more problems* than research carried out in one country. When weighing the potential outcome of these investments for one's career, it may be more beneficial to work at the national level.

In spite of these problems, those working in international comparative adult education report personal enrichment and reward from experiencing the wider international world.

See also: dialogue, international adult education.

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Jost Reischmann

Competency-Based Education

Competency-based education/learning (CBE) in essence involves the education/training and evaluation of individuals to predetermined standards to establish or predict effective performance (competency). In practice, however, competence or competency is difficult to define (see Wolf, 1995). While there is disagreement among writers about the defining characteristics of CBE, these include: training to agreed performance standards with expected outcomes explicitly stated to learners; carefully delineated programs which include only skills and knowledge relevant to the immediate training objectives; employment of criterion-referenced rather than normative assessment; and movement from time-based training, characteristic of traditional apprenticeship systems, to outcomes-based concerns. The competency standards involved are perceived by proponents of the approach to be essentially "real world" standards derived from business requirements.

CBE reemerged as an important force in English-speaking countries in adult vocational education through the last decade of the 20th century because of technological, economic and social revolutions and increased international competition from Japan, Germany and the emerging Asian economies that threatened the economic supremacy of English-speaking countries. High youth unemployment then also created the need for quick, political solutions (Wolf, 2002).

The origins of CBE lie in Taylorist principles of scientific management, and more specifically the application of those principles in the war effort to reduce skills shortages in welding, etc. and to produce battle-ready military personnel quickly during the Second World War in the USA (see Kanigel, 1997). The more recent resurgence of CBE is also closely linked to the economic rationalist policies of politicians like Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and hence this approach has ideological dimensions that focus upon cost-cutting and efficiency in achieving outcomes.

In CBE, summative assessment, in the form of outcome standards, dictates procedures adopted including final assessment and the construction of precise learning programs to achieve the stated outcomes. Regardless of the possibilities in theory, in practice little attention is paid to learning processes in CBE curricula, with this resulting more in training than education. Consequently, CBE is frequently referred to as competency-based