

## **In Search of Units for Comparative Studies in Education**

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Conventionally the Nation-State has been used as a Unit in Comparative Education. In view of the geo-political settings in the United States of America and Bundesrepublik der Deutschland, and the former USSR, for example, they had no nation-states in their political systems. In this sense, the beginning statement on the unit is partially admitted. Nowadays when globalization of human institutional activities are more prevalent over the various areas of social, economic, political, cultural and religious actions, the notion of nation-state cannot easily be accepted as the research unit in comparative studies in education.

What can be the new units for comparative studies in education? The author would argue for the notion of Topos (場), and its possibilities for generative discourse-formations in comparative education. Education being living dynamics, the new unit should be responsive to any cultural idioms which are idiosyncratic to education in question. Therefore, any new units for comparison, in the frameworks of Topos, should embrace logical reference to time and space, and should clarify sign-symbol representations of human culture about generation-building, by which some more general and securer descriptive-explanatory discourses in comparative education could be formed and enhanced in quality. Difference between Topos and Fields is to be explained.

### 1, Historical Retrospect

#### (1) Experts-Meeting in 1950s: Aims and Scopes of Comparative Education

- (a) methodological discussions:
  - i) nomothetic versus ii) idiosyncratic
- (b) topic for comparative studies in education:
  - 1) child-bringing-up
  - 2) practical support to policy-choice
  - 3) theoretical innovation and development
- (c) typology of discourses
  - 1) meliorative versus theoretical
  - 2) historico-philosophical versus scientific
  - 3) descriptive versus explanatory
  - 4) macroscopic versus microscopic

(2) Trends in 1960s: New Waves

(a) various text-books

Noah and Ecstein, Edmund King, Robert Ulrich, I. L. Kandel  
Brian Holmes, V. Mallinson, etc

(b) Common Issues

1) terminology

2) data

3) theoretical assumption: European or American origins

positivism, logical positivism,

structuralism, epistemology,

pragmatism, behaviorism

neo-Marxism, existentialism

(c) Problem Approach: Brian Holmes

1) theoretical presupposition; John Dewey and Karl Popper

2) theoretical features; falsifiability and problem-solution (processes)

3) post-relativism in physics

(3) Assumptions on Governance: “Democracy”—image of ‘man’ or ‘the world-view’

(a) ‘citizenship’; individualism versus collectivism

(b) principles of parity of esteem

(c) educability of human beings

(4) New Tasks for International / Global Governance

—How to overcome various ‘—ism’s’?

(a) state-centrism

(b) ethno-centrism

(c) anthro-centrism

(d) capital centrism : re-definition of ‘capital’

(e) Euro-centrism (cultural monopoly or dominance over multi-cultues)

(5) New Units for Comparative Studies in Education

(a) innovative conceptions of ‘education’—liberation from “—centrism”

Assumptions A I : Categorical Relationships for Education-Knowledge

$\alpha$  ; Children grow (A-I-  $\alpha$  )

$\beta$  ; -The Grown-up’s help Children grow (A-I-  $\beta$  )

$\gamma$  ; The Grown-up’s grow with Children (A-I-  $\gamma$  )

Assumption B II : Meta-Categories of / for Human Growth (Development)

$\alpha$  ; Matter (Natural Beings) relates with Matter (B-II-  $\alpha$  )

$\beta$  ; Human Beings relate with Matter (B-II-  $\beta$  )

$\gamma$  ; Human Beings relate with Human Beings (B-II  $\gamma$  -)

Corollary A to Assumption B:

$\alpha$  ; Living Beings relate with Natural Beings (C-A-  $\alpha$  )

$\beta$  ; Living Beings relate with Living Beings (C-A-  $\beta$  )

$\gamma$  ; Living Being relate with Human beings (C-A-  $\gamma$  )

(b) framework of human conceptualization

—‘estrangement or alienation’ of experiences

Assumption C III: definition of human experience

Experience = being in the series of situations

Situation = structure of ‘environments’ and ‘subject’

Environment = meaningfully selected surroundings

Corollary B to Assumption C:

Environment = ‘subject’ in the structure(s) of “B-II-  $\alpha$  +  
 $\beta$  +  $\gamma$ ” with meaning

‘subject’ = body-mind complex, first, in Assumption B,  
and, second, in Corollary A

Assumption D IV; conceptions = abstract alienation of experiences

by ways of, first, voice and body, and second, signs,

symbols and word, finally languages with grammar

Corollary C to Assumption D:

$\alpha$  five senses of human beings;

1) base of conceptual representation, and

2) basic ways (path) of representations

$\beta$  conception;

1) cycle of abstract utterance of alienated human  
experiences

2) cycle of hermeneutic acceptance, understanding  
and representation of human experiences

$\gamma$  discourse;

1) one mode of representation in language

2) orders; relating to the extent of abstract order of  
conceptions, there come two orders, at least

(c) 'Topos' or Body-Educational

- a) 'topos': it is common for the researchers to select any topics for investigations or to setting any problems for solution. The notion of 'topos', originally Greek, has interesting connotation: (a) common place, (b) local, (c) topic ; a subject people talk or write about and (d) topical; interesting because of dealing with anything important at the present time. From the viewpoint of comparative education it may suggest a possibility to build a conception on the bricks of 'common place', 'local' and 'topical'.
- b) 'body educational': new idea for the unit of comparison
- 1) geo-body: consisting of (a) geographical territory, (b) population, (c) language(s) identified as political representation, (d) history of institutions and culture, and (e) government;
  - 2) sub-institutional geo-bodies: (a) body politic, (b) body economic, (c) body normative, (d) body technique and (e) body aesthetic;
  - 3) abstraction of geo-body; imagined community (i.e. imagined state)
  - 4) abstraction of sub-institutional geo-bodies; knowledge, learning, technology, industry, and governance (i.e. government)
  - 5) body educational as compounds of geo-body and sub-institutional geo-bodies; indice of the body educational abstracted;

**temporal and spatial:**

- ①, schooling: length, courses, curricula
- ②, orientation: general, liberal, vocational, professional
- ③, caring; babyhood, childhood, adulthood, 'geronto-hood'

**substantive, functional, and rhythmic**

- ④, capability: disability—ability abscissa ( $\alpha$ )
  - ⑤, development: immaturity—maturity ordinate ( $\beta$ )
  - ⑥, norms; folk, social, moral, religious, legal ( $\gamma$ )
  - ⑦, values; utility—aesthetics ( $\kappa$ )
  - ⑧, ideals / images of personhood
  - ⑨, culture-patterns: uniformity—conformity—nonconformity
  - ⑩, ways of thinking: (a) Greco-Roman, Catholic, Indian, Chinese, etc, (b) endogenous rational system of problem- solutions, (c) law-finding—fact-finding, etc
- 6) new task: development of terminology in and for comparative studies in education (unfinished)