



Comparative Education: Exploring Issues in International Context (2nd Edition)

By Patricia K. Kubow, Paul R. Fossum

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Comparative Education invites readers to consider theory in comparative education, purposes of schooling, educational access and opportunity, education accountability and authority, teacher professionalism, and how globalization is impacting education. Taking an issues-based approach, it addresses current educational concerns both at home and abroad, and includes analytic frameworks that foster critical thinking and reinforce a systematic method for examination. Biographical sketches add human interest and side-by-side comparisons explore various countries' demographic attributes, geophysical and economic realities, and socio political factors. Because the book focuses on issues instead of countries, it reinforces how and why comparative education is relevant for educators in today's global society.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

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A major purpose of this book is to widen the field of comparative education's influence by articulating the relevance of comparative education to include a larger, practitioner-oriented audience. We believe that the comparative study of education fosters depth of reflection that is not only useful but also necessary for all people engaged in the educative task. At present, however, there are few introductory texts available that acquaint students with comparative education and that equip students with the skills of comparative inquiry to enable systematic exploration of key issues affecting educational policies, practices, and reforms at home and abroad.

Over the past 50 years, the field of comparative education has been moving in the direction of examining education-related issues as opposed to educational systems. This focus is a promising direction for the field, because not only does an issues-oriented approach encourage researchers to compare issues that are affecting education worldwide, but it also has relevancy and currency for in-service and preservice educators whose responsibilities are becoming increasingly challenging in light of diverse sociocultural, political, and economic factors shaping the educational landscape at large.

In light of globalization, the educational dilemmas that one society faces are often issues of importance in other nations as well. A primary benefit of comparative inquiry is that it causes educators, as well as their students, to widen their conceptual lenses to see how seemingly similar issues manifest themselves in diverse settings. Comparative perspective taking enables us to see the issues anew in our home contexts for the purpose of informing our decision making on those issues.

THE BOOK'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This book, then, adopts an issues-oriented approach, emphasizing the comparative perspective. The rationale for a comparative examination of educational issues is to broaden students' views of education and the complex interplay of factors that influence it. The four issues explored here are purposes of schooling, educational access and opportunity, educator accountability and authority, and teacher professionalism. These issues continue to be at the center of public scrutiny and educational debate within and outside the United States. We examine each educational issue in the context of two different countries for purposes of comparison and contrast.

The eight countries and regions of study within this text comprise a diverse and broad set but should not be viewed as a representative sampling of all cultures or countries. Rather, the countries and regions selected highlight the complexity and tensions in education and how culture, politics, economics, and social values coalesce to shape ways in which educational issues are interpreted in various settings. A comparative approach, therefore, helps students identify similarities and differences by calling attention to certain aspects of the educational issue within unique national contexts. A benefit of such an approach is that it broadens the scope and context for the examination of education while exposing students to the current comparative literature. These goals are important to students as they sharpen analysis of and reflection on their own professional practice.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The text is divided into three parts. Part 1, titled "*Comparative Education and Underlying Assumptions About Education: The Comparative Approach*," consists of two chapters. In Chapter 1, "*Comparative Education*," we introduce students to the field of comparative education and the field's development and usefulness, and in Chapter 2, "*Theory in Comparative Education*," we discuss prevailing theoretical bases that comparative educators have used to interpret educational policies and practices.

In Part 2, titled "*Education in International Context: A Comparative Approach Applied to Contemporary Educational Issues*," we examine the four selected issues, each in relation to two different countries to foster comparative perspective taking. Chapter 3 undertakes the question of how diverse purposes of schooling shape educational curriculum in Hong Kong and Israel. In Chapter 4, we examine challenges to educational access and opportunity in Brazil and South Africa. In Chapter 5 we explore the changing relationship between education and the state and how this affects education accountability and authority in England and Germany. The focus of Chapter 6 is upon different orientations to the issue of teacher professionalism and the ways these perspectives affect teacher autonomy and professional development in Japan and the United States.

Part 3, titled "*Interpreting Educational Issues: Comparison and the Use of Analytic Frameworks*," consists of two chapters. In Chapter 7, "*Applying Frameworks to Analyze Educational Issues*," we encourage students to use frameworks, drawn from diverse disciplines, for systematic investigation and analysis of educational issues. The chapter provides a brief summary of the four frameworks discussed previously in the text. We place the frameworks in graphic organizers with questions to stimulate further thinking. Our purpose in this chapter is to suggest how the frameworks, whose usefulness is demonstrated throughout the entire text, are also effective in helping students consider issues in domestic and localized contexts. Instructors might want to use Chapter 7 earlier in the term to introduce students to each framework prior to their reading of the issue-oriented chapters and/or to generate student assignments. Finally, Chapter 8, "*The Value of Comparative Education*," summarizes benefits of comparative perspective taking and an issues orientation for the field. An innate feature of an issue is that there is a plurality of responses. Because multiple responses are possible for any given question or situation, answers to questions undertaken yield ambiguous responses.

Teachers and teacher educators need to be able to recognize these ambiguities and become comfortable enough to move ahead in their practice.

FEATURES OF THE TEXT

To help students view these educational issues in their complexity and to aid in-depth reflection, we use specific **analytic frameworks** to study the educational issues and provide students with a systematic method for examination. The frameworks emerge from diverse disciplines and fields (e.g., political science, educational policy, sociology) and can be applied to other issues of interest to the reader in order to foster critical thinking—the suspension of judgment in order to draw on multiple perspectives. This leads to better understanding of factors affecting the educational issue or phenomenon being studied and to better informed educational reform efforts. The goal is for students to see that education can be better understood when viewed from multiple perspectives and disciplines.

Each chapter includes various pedagogical features, including focusing and closing questions. The "**Focusing Questions**" at the beginning of each chapter serve to identify the particular aspects of the issue to be addressed in the chapter, and the closing statements, termed "**Sustaining Reflection**," that appear at the end of each chapter serve as launching points for further reflection. The book's glossary identifies key terms and definitions that students using a comparative approach should be familiar with and that will aid their understanding of the issues presented.

The text also has a number of special features, including boldface terms and boxed features. In each chapter, key terms appear in boldface with their accompanying definitions. **Biographical sketches** of historical and contemporary comparative educators are featured throughout the text. These help to familiarize students with three international and three American comparative educators who have used international perspectives to guide domestic educational efforts, providing new perspectives on sometimes familiar individuals. "**Points of Convergence**," another boxed feature, appear in the issues chapters within Part 2 and provide readers with side-by-side comparisons of featured countries, with respect to such things as their demographic, geophysical, and sociopolitical factors.

In summary, this text seeks to (1) broaden the scope and context for examining educational issues through an international comparative approach; (2) increase understanding by examining underlying assumptions of education policies, practices, and reforms; (3) encourage multiple perspective taking by viewing educational issues in light of diverse cultural and historical contexts and through interdisciplinary lenses; and (4) employ specific analytic frameworks to "see" educational issues in new ways. The overall goal of these approaches and features is to foster comparative and critical thinking to better inform educational reform efforts.

We hope that professors, teacher practitioners, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and school administrators find that this book stimulates reflection and helps to inform their own personal and professional decision making.

Users Review

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