

STUDIES
IN PEDAGOGY,
ANDRAGOGY,
AND GERONTAGOGY

Jost Reischmann
Michal Bron jr
(eds.)

Comparative
Adult Education 2008

Experiences and Examples

61

PETER LANG

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ANDRAGOGY,
AND GERONTAGOGY

Edited by Franz Pöggeler

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Adult Education 2008

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for Comparative Adult Education ISCAE



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Michal Bron Jr, ISCAE, Södertörn University College, Sweden

Research in Comparative Adult Education. An Introduction

Only by understanding the basic cultural and social forces in different countries, and by realizing how these factors influence the total educational system, will it be possible to gain a true understanding of the adult education enterprise and activities in a particular country and to develop theories and studies to compare the influence of these factors on adult education in different countries (Liveright & Haygood, 1968, p. 11).

Comparison is, and should be, considered as a specific kind of intellectual activity. Comparative study is focused on analyzing and interpreting cultural, social, political, and other phenomena in two or more communities, societies, or countries. Social scientists cannot design and run experiments to steer and manipulate social phenomena and to observe the results of them. But what researchers can do is to describe and classify, to organize and explain the diverse combinations of events which were observed in different societies (Almond & Powell, 1984).

Any research undertaken in social sciences implies some form of comparison. Comparative studies might be intra-national or international - "An intra-national study is the comparison of a topic in two or more situations within one country and an international study is the comparison of a topic in two or more countries" (Charters & Siddiqui 1989, p. 3).

Many researchers limit comparisons within a single cultural setting or society; this is reasonable, as it feels safer to work within their own culture and society. Although many of those, who dare to go beyond the one setting, restrict themselves to compare sets of similar cultures or politics (*cf.* still a great number of British-American comparisons). However, the realm of comparative education has been broadened, and the label of comparative and international education has been adopted so as to accommodate single-nation or single-region research as well as truly comparative studies.

Many 'comparative' studies appear in the form of a series of 'parallel' studies of different countries, with the actual comparative work left to the reader. If they do take a comparative view, the analysis is limited to identifying the differences and similarities between countries. Sometimes it is fruitful to simply determine those similarities and/or differences. However, while the quantity of information grows, ambitions to discover more of the hidden processes and rela-

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tionships should also increase. A number of studies which recognised that many of the problems faced in countries A, B, and C are not dissimilar from those faced in D, E, and F nations of the world have been published and sometimes, the similarities in the problems are quite striking.

ISCAE – the International Society for Comparative Adult Education – focuses its interest on international comparison. The aim of the conferences and publications is to collect, share, and discuss the actual knowledge about comparative research in adult education. International comparison means to explicitly identify and analyze similarities and differences in two or more countries and extends beyond description and/or juxtaposition: “A study in comparative international adult education ... must include one or more aspects of adult education in two or more countries or regions. ... comparison ... 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).

ISCAE's Mission and Objectives

ISCAE (www.iscae.org) could be described as a network of about 150 persons in 35 countries. The terms “network”, “worldwide person-to-person contacts”, and “international research exchange” may best characterize the idea and work of ISCAE.

The society was formed by Alexander N. Charters, Syracuse University, USA, and used the name “Committee for Study and Research in Comparative Adult Education (CSRCAE)”. At the 1992 meeting of the society in conjunction with the annual conference of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) in Anaheim/Los Angeles a new board was elected to lead the society. At this occasion the society was renamed as the “International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE)”.

The mission of ISCAE is to:

1. promote identity of the field of Comparative Adult Education;
2. provide study and research in the field;
3. advance the field of Comparative Adult Education;
4. enhance continuing interest in Comparative Adult Education;
5. offer a network to professionals around the world interested in Comparative Adult Education from either a research or professional perspective or from general interest;
6. strengthen linkages with other groups and associations who have a similar interest.

To fulfil the mission of increasing the awareness and value of comparative education to society-at-large both nationally and globally, ISCAE is devoted to serve international comparison by supplying a network of contacts to other

comparativists, fostering exchange through conferences, and documenting and sharing the developments and standards in publications.

ISCAE invites at its conferences and publications all colleagues – whether or not they have previously been in contact with ISCAE – to participate with papers, which:

- report developments or “state of the art” reviews of comparative research (in a country/region/language);
- compare one or more topics of adult education/andragogy in two or more countries;
- deal with critical reflection on comparative theory/methods/principles;
- reflect and share experiences in international research endeavors, including lessons learned, problems, promises, challenges, and pitfalls typical for comparative studies.

The first conference initiated and organized by ISCAE took place in 1995 in Bamberg, Germany (Charters, 1999). 31 members from 14 countries attended the conference. Central focus of this conference was the discussion of methods, problems and pitfalls of international comparative research. The second conference was held 1998 in Radovljica, Slovenia and was attended by 35 members from 16 countries. In 2002 ISCAE had its third conference in conjunction with the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education in St. Louis, USA, 49 participants from 9 countries attended. In 2006 ISCAE again met at Bamberg University, Germany. This fourth conference counted 63 participants from 17 countries and took place together with the Induction Ceremony of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (www.halloffame.outreach.ou.edu) and the 11th Conference on the History of Adult Education.

The intention is to plan ISCAE conferences every three to four years, in different countries and continents and through this, document the development of Comparative Adult Education.

How the book is composed

When ISCAE published its first volume about Comparative Adult Education (Reischmann, Bron & Jelenc, 1999), the intention was to start a series of publications documenting and discussing the ongoing development of comparative adult education – aims, contents, methods, obstacles and prospects. This first volume was mainly based on papers presented at the ISCAE-conferences in Bamberg, Germany (1995), and in Radovljica, Slovenia (1998).

Most contributions in this volume originated from papers presented at the conferences in St. Louis, USA (2002), and in Bamberg, Germany (2006). Some contributions have been commissioned specially for this volume. All of them underwent a peer-review and editing process and have been updated and rewritten for the purpose of publishing.

Part A contains contributions that focus on fundamental questions in comparative adult education. These articles can be used for reflection, clarification, and confirmation when starting a comparative project or when projects questions come up. They may help to identify the aims the researchers want to achieve, offering a deeper understanding of the different types and categories of comparative research. They supply historical background that helps to place a comparative project in its historical context, and warnings to be aware of obstacles and pitfalls. In this way, these articles should help to design comparative studies, building on the theoretical and historical framework developed by and through prior research and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Part B collects experiences and "lessons learned". The authors have been asked to share their experiences and to report what they encountered in international and comparative projects, for example: What happened while working in a nationally mixed group? What made communication and understanding difficult or easy? What was most confusing? What fulfilled the researcher's expectations and what contradicted them? What were the differences, benefits, and difficulties working in national networks compared with the international network? What was the value, but also the disappointments when working in an international group? These experiences, observations, and reflections intend to supply a source of advice and warnings, what problems or surprises might happen when working in an international context; they also may help researchers to avoid some of the problems, or at least to be not too surprised when they occur.

Part C reports examples from the field, presenting a variety of topics as well as approaches to comparative studies. It might be interesting for the reader to discover the topics important to researchers in various regions of the world. The studies also illustrate how comparative research can be done, and which different methods are used.

As in the first volume the editors have also included in this book descriptions of a number of organizations working in the international and comparative field (*Part D*). This background information about these organizations should serve readers to decide, when and how to contact them and use their assistance and services. Internet addresses and the list of participants of the conferences in St. Louis, USA, 2002 and Bamberg, Germany, 2006, close the book.

Emerging changes in comparative adult education

The first volume published by ISCAE (Reischman, Bron & Jelenc, 1999) claimed in its subtitle "The contribution of ISCAE to an emerging field of study" that this field is emerging. Editing this new volume one could ask "what has changed in that decade"?

Certainly it would be too much to say that international comparison in adult education became stabilized or established in that time. The number of papers offered and participation in the conferences were somewhat higher, but not

really much more. The "guild of comparativists" has not grown much. Again, it turned out that only a small number of researchers have international comparison as their main field. It also became apparent that a number of reputable older colleagues have retired, will no longer be available and will be sadly missed in this community. And a number of new researchers entered the field, often dealing only partly with international comparison. They often join for one single project, and their stay is without continuity.

The papers offered to the conference also showed that the number of larger comparisons of two or more countries still is limited. The focus is often less on comparison and elaborated comparative methodology, but more on the content of the respective study. The references and literature list often documented that the comparison was started with limited methodological awareness. That new researchers do not build much on the methodological knowledge means that wheels are reinvented, thus losing time, power, and results. So one of the aims of ISCAE and this book is to raise the methodological awareness of the researchers, and through this awareness to strengthen comparative adult education as an academic approach.

What has changed in the years since the appearance of the first ISCAE volume and contributed to the "emergence" of new developments in comparative adult education? Two new developments within comparative adult education may be identified - the first is the growing number of internationally composed research groups; the second concerns a new actor entering the scene of internationally conducted research undertakings.

Throughout the late 1990s and 2000s a rapid growth of internationally composed groups and networks could be observed - often as a result of granting policies of international bodies, especially the European Union. Together those groups are researching and developing various topics/phenomena in their countries. But often these developments and experiences are kept only standing side-by-side or are harmonized to what is "general" - without the explicit attempt for comparison and analyzing similarities and differences. This observation applies even to an individual research association - the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA - www.esrea.org) which was established in 1991. All their activities, seminars, research-networks and research-teams, always attract researchers from countries throughout the European continent. Throughout the last fifteen years ESREA's networks have produced a number of scholarly publications. The good news is that this increased and strengthened internationally composed groups and networks in adult education research. But in spite of increasing international activities, no publication or seminar has focused explicitly on methodology of comparative studies or on actually comparing the phenomena under examination. This is a worrying development. The new international networks could constitute a relevant point of departure for fully comparative analyses. This chance should be used.

Another development within comparative adult education concerns an emergence of a new way to carry out parallel research in several countries. A number of so-called consultancy institutes have been established in several EU countries. If successful in bidding for EU short-term research grants, they hire researchers from relevant countries to gather data and prepare country-reports. However, such researchers have quite often to accept unscholarly conditions of work. Methods, time-scope, sets of questions, deadlines, and many other details of such research project are often decided and formulated by and within the contracting institution with limited room, and sometimes with limited sensitivity for country or local specifics. The final reports, compiled by staff of the consultancy institutes, are often of an overview character, though the data they have gathered could have been used for a comparative analysis *per se*. This kind of research has currently been institutionalized and is receiving its legitimacy from fund allocating agencies. It should be carefully observed how these funding decisions serve the standard and quality of international comparison.

Conclusions

When preparing this book we – the editors – went through the literature of comparative adult education of the last decades and found several strengths and weaknesses. Of course we wanted to make everything better. The editing process became both a rewarding and a learning experience. We hope that we have learned what mistakes are to be avoided in studies of comparative adult education:

- not just printing a conglomerate of contribution presented somewhere/sometimes at one or another conference;
- not placing a series of 'parallel' studies from different countries side-by-side, with the actual comparative work left to the reader;
- not presenting a loose collection of "interesting topics" from somewhere in the world;
- not forgetting the effort of reading and referring to the existing body of relevant scholarly literature;
- not supporting a 'safari-type' research (cf. Szalai, 1977) where an individual specialist travels, observes, and decides upon methods and techniques without networking much with the scientific community of the studied country;
- taking care that concepts, names, and institutions are not just translated into English language, but - when words could not be translated - trying to describe what is meant.

Being aware of these threads when editing this volume we tried to strengthen and support a more systematic approach. We asked the contributors to include methodological reflections, to go beyond description, and to share their reasons and explanations. We tried to read the articles with foreigner's eyes, and suggested amendments to "overcome one's own ethnocentric blindness" (Reisch-

mann, 2005, p. 137). We asked, for example, to translate acronyms into words that would be understood in other parts of the world; or to add the name of the country which the authors forgot because it seemed to her/him self-evident.

But still we had to learn the lessons all editors experience in this type of work:

- Suggest changes diplomatically (with the limited results of this method)!
- Be friendly (especially to the Americans, Russians, Germans, Swedes, colleagues of your own and all other countries, to the newcomers, old-timers and everybody else) - they are known to be sensitive!
- Don't start an international conflict!
- Take what you get – you will get nothing else!
- Be humble and trust that the next book will be better!

But first this book had to be written and offered to the scientific community. Hopefully it gives ideas to future authors and editors that make their work easier and better. And hopefully it will not only contribute to the emerging development of comparative adult education, but will also motivate new researchers to enter this challenging and rewarding field.

Certainly international comparative work has specific hindrances, for example coping with sources and material produced by predecessors, working in a foreign language, or being able to implement the appropriate methods. A crucial issue is whether questions and answers can be meaningfully translated from one language, and one social reality, into another. All these reflections ought to be anchored in the particular socio-cultural settings. Researchers who succeeded in overcoming these hindrances can benefit from the real virtues of comparative studies, and can include their readership in this better understanding. For comparisons may not only help in determining similarities and differences, but also can contribute to identify those forces which initiated the studied phenomena.

The comparative work and approach in this book certainly will not overcome all ethnocentric blindness, and can not solve all the problems of international exchange. But it can reduce ethnocentric perception, and might contribute to a better international understanding. Reflection on and learning about research methods are the academic way to proceed in the direction of better knowing.

This introduction of this second volume of ISCAE ends with the same sentence the introduction of ISCAE's first volume ended: Persons interested in international comparative adult education are invited to join ISCAE. ISCAE offers a person at the other end of the telephone or E-mail line. And it offers a chance not only to maintain virtual but to also have face-to-face-contact.

These shared and applicable experiences on an individual or national level might - apart from all knowledge and insights - be one of the most enriching outcomes of international comparative research.

Many helping hands were needed to prepare this book. The editors want to thank all the contributors to this volume, and the proofreaders Monica Bell,

Shauna Busto Gilligan, Sandra Fields, Rosa Lisa Iannone, Susan Isenberg, Bob Muldoon, and all others that helped us to present this book to the scientific community. We hope it will serve those already doing international comparative research as well as those who are planning to enter this challenging field.

Bamberg, Uppsala, January 2008
Jost Reischmann, Michal Bron Jr

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A. Comparative Adult Education: Developments and Potentials

Jost Reischmann
Bamberg University, Germany

Comparative Adult Education: Arguments, Typology, Difficulties

In this introductory chapter, a short overview of background ideas that frame the reflection on and research of international comparative adult education is given. International comparison is described as an everyday experience and defined as a scientific approach. The main arguments for international comparative adult education are collected here, as well as examples for international activities in the last century. Furthermore, a typology of comparative adult education is presented, followed by a description of difficulties and problems of comparative work. Finally, perspectives for the future of international comparative adult education are offered.

1. International comparison - an everyday experience

When traveling abroad – or hosting foreigners at home – comparison is inevitable; we compare the weather, the prices, and besides many other items, our professional experiences. Comparison proves to be an everyday human strategy. When comparing we find similarities and differences. The perceived differences may lead firsthand to confusion and misunderstanding:

- When I bring a dozen of my students from my university in Germany to an American Adult Education conference, my colleagues are surprised; the average age of my German adult education students is about 23. The average age of the American adult education students my colleagues bring to the conference seems to be around forty.
- When somebody wants to know if my students are undergraduate or postgraduate, I do not know how to answer. In the German higher education system there is - up to now - no equivalent for that distinction. So I explain: After 13 years of school students matriculate at the university where they study pedagogy and andragogy for the next four to five years; after that they go out with a "Diplom" to be valued professionals for the next forty years.
- "But where are the adult learners?" my American colleagues ask me when visiting my university. I am confused: "Why and to what end should adults

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learn at a university and not with their employer or at adult education institutions?"

All of these examples have one thing in common: Both sides become aware that what we are used to understanding as "normal" suddenly does not apply to the international context (e.g.: To become an adult education professional, you have to be in the second half of life. Universities are structured in undergraduate/graduate categories. Adults want and have to change their careers by attending universities). This leads to confusion. Two basically different reactions are possible: either to stick to one's own concepts, and hope that those strangers will adapt to the "right" (= my) way. This reaction describes the ethnocentric position, leading – if power and money comes into play – to colonization. Or to become aware that in our interpretation of our world perception-patterns exist of "how things are", which are not the only one and only right concepts in the world. The need for more exchange and clarification emerges, leading to an international-comparative reflection and hopefully understanding and valuing.

2. International comparison - a scientific approach

Comparative Adult Education on the scholarly level describes an approach to understanding and forming adult education, in which one or more aspects in two or more countries are compared. This comparison is based on methodically gained data and identifies similarities and differences between the aspects under study. These similarities and differences and their significance for theory and practice of adult education in the examined countries should be explained.

This general definition needs two additional specifications:

1. Although comparison can occur within a single country (intra-national), the term typically stands for 'international comparative adult education', meaning the comparison between countries.
2. 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 analyzing a foreign country.

3. Why international comparison?

A number of arguments are named that give good reason for comparative research. They might be categorized into curiosity, applicational, and educational arguments:

3.1 Curiosity, Knowledge, Understanding

Humans have a built-in curiosity – the mother of all questioning and research – to know how things are. Thus a first argument for comparison is knowledge - "to

satisfy an interest in how human beings live and learn ... to become better informed about adult education systems of other countries" (Kidd, 1975, p. 10). This information helps to better understand adult education in a foreign country: "comparative education can make 'strange patterns familiar'" (Spindler and Spindler in Bray 2003, p. 7).

In addition it is claimed that this knowledge and understanding gained by the outside-look to a foreign country reflects back to better understanding one's own country: observations made in a foreign context help to better perceive and understand adult education and how it operates not only in the other, but also in one's own country, making "familiar patterns strange" (Spindler and Spindler in Bray 2003, p. 7) - opening through the perceived similarities and differences a new perspective to phenomena that seemed "normal" and "natural" before.

These processes of looking-outside and of reflecting-back are expected to have an effect beyond the mere comparison. It is argued that studying the historical, social, and cultural influences leads "to develop criteria for assessing contemporary developments and testing possible outcomes" (Kidd, 1975, p. 10). Hence "comparative studies of education are valuable as scholarly activities which deepen understanding of the forces which shape education systems and processes" (Bray in this book).

3.2 Practical Application: Borrowing, Copying

A second line of arguments aims toward practical benefit: It is hoped that learning from experiences abroad helps to adapt foreign experiences to one's own practice; this should help avoid repeating (expensive) mistakes and "re-inventing the wheel". Bray summarizes in this book that "comparative studies ... are ... valuable as instruments for policy makers and practitioners to effect improvements by learning about what does and does not work in a range of settings". Charters uses the terms "efficiently", "effectively", and "useful" to refer to this practical benefit: International comparison is done "in order that international developments may proceed more efficiently and effectively ... (and) is useful in developing the theory and practice of Adult Education" (Charters, 1999, p. 55).

Often in this argument the term "borrowing" is used (although Bray in this book argues, that "borrowing is perhaps a misnomer since it implies that the models will be given back after use, which is very rare"). The terms "copying" or "importing" are used less often, because it is argued that the transfer from one culture or setting to another seldom allows a pure copy without adaptation.

One specific expected practical outcome of comparative adult education is that learning from each other supports peace: "Research ... assists in developing cooperation and understanding which is a basis for peace" (Charters, 1999, p. 55). Similarly the UNESCO Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education states the hope "to construct a culture of peace" (1997, chapter 14).

3.3 Education, Transformation

A third group of arguments for comparative adult education claims that international comparison changes, educates, and transforms the person undertaking this comparison. "Understanding" and "supporting peace" already mentioned include some of these educational and transformative aspects. But it is argued more clearly here that attitudes and values are changed and transformed, leading to more tolerance against differing ways of life and learning, reducing the fear of the strange. These changes go beyond "knowing" and "using" and include a basic personal transformation: The international-comparative perspective assists to overcome one's own ethnocentric blindness. Similarly Kidd states that international comparison helps "to better understand oneself; (and) to reveal how one's own cultural biases and personal attributes affect one's judgment" (1975, p. 10). Many researchers confirm through their own experience that these personal, educating and transforming benefits do apply - examples can be found in several contributions to this book.

The groups of arguments justifying international comparative research are by themselves usually taken as self-evident. To support the international comparative idea, practice, and funding more research seems necessary to gain more knowledge about how these processes of knowledge-exchange, borrowing, and transformation in reality happen, how they can be supported, and what makes them more or less successful.

4. The international interest in andragogy

In the emerging history of andragogy - the "Wissenschaft" or science of the education and learning of adults - we find a continuous interest in adult education in other countries, as was previously pointed out (Reischmann, Bron, Jelenc, 1999, p. 11). In the century between Grundtvig (Denmark) and Freire (Brazil) a number of names and ideas attained international currency. The Danish 'Folkhøjskole', the English university extension movement, the Swedish study circle, and the American encounter group movement became models for adult education in other countries - even if often the differences between the 'borrowed' and the original have not been perceived. Research shows a lot of cross-cultural communication, for example the British-Dutch-German relationship in adult education between 1880 and 1930 (Friedenthal-Haase, Hake & Marriott, 1991).

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.

Institutions were founded for International exchange: As early as 1919 the World Association for Adult Education (WAAE) was founded with the mission "to bring into co-operation and mutual relationship the adult education move-

ments and institutions of the world, in order that peoples may proceed in greater power through wisdom - the mother of all things - to knowledge". A number of institutions working in the international arena of adult education are described in the appendix of this book.

Conferences also contributed to the international exchange of adult education on the scientific and practical level, where the "guild of international adult education experts" can be found in face-to-face meetings. Just to name a few of them (for more details: Knoll, 1999; Charters, Bray in this book): At the UNESCO-world conference on Adult Education (Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes = CONFINTEA) 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. "According to popular descriptions comparative adult education research began at the Exeter-Conference, which A. Liveright organized in 1966" (Knoll, 1999, p. 21, similar Titmus, 1999, p. 33). It 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 published the papers from the World Council of Comparative and International Education (WCCES) in Montreal. Other meetings brought comparatists together in Ibadan, Ghana (the International Conference on Comparative Adult Education 1991). In Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1992, Colin Titmus, Great Britain, chaired a working group at the VIII World Council of Comparative Education Societies. The 1993 conference 'Rethinking Adult Education for Development' assembled the comparatists in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Hamburg, Germany, hosted 1997 the UNESCO CONFINTEA V Conference. In Bamberg, Germany, ISCAE's first conference (1995) took place; 2006 Bamberg convened researchers at the 4th ISCAE-Conference, combining it with the 11th Standing Conference on the History of Adult Education, and for first time outside the USA the Induction Ceremony of the Adult Education Hall of Fame. When describing the history of comparative adult education authors often use these conferences for structuring their description of the development of the field (e.g. Knoll 1999, Titmus 1999, Charters in this book).

These examples indicate that in many countries an international interest in adult education can be observed. The international argument was and is used in the theory of adult education as well as in the practical work carried out in many countries. The effects of the international argument are sometimes evident and lasting; sometimes it remains rhetorical or marginal. 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. This research is indispensable in a world where it is

necessary to gain an understanding of the various ways adult education is experienced in many countries.

5. Putting meanings into boxes: Types of international comparative adult education

The definitions in this field are not really distinct. There are clearly two different aspects when talking about international work in adult education: a more practical, action-oriented perspective, and a more academic, reflection-oriented understanding.

5.1 International Adult Education: Practical, action-oriented

The more practical, action-oriented understanding of international adult education refers to all activities that support learning experiences aimed at the connection with other nationalities and cultures - within or outside of one's own country. "International adult education refers to the effort of adult educators to work globally in a diversity of contexts in order to educate for liberation, equality, and freedom" (Hall 2005, p. 312). The main focus of international adult education is to educate how to become and behave as a more "international" person, thus leading to more exchange, understanding, and respect, both on a personal and national level.

This perspective includes foreign language courses (which make up about one third of the offerings in German adult education centers), excursions to museums or exhibitions in neighboring countries (which is easy in smaller countries like Germany, where in less than four or five hours - depending on the starting point - Amsterdam/The Netherlands, Paris/France, Zürich/Switzerland, Salzburg/Austria or Prague/Czech Republic can be reached), including a walk around, some shopping, and a local beer. This understanding also includes educational travel tours to foreign countries.

Sometimes this "looking beyond one's own national borders" is a welcomed byproduct (like in vacation traveling); sometimes it is explicitly planned. For example, after World War II, countries in Europe supported programs that brought juveniles and young adults together in order to build and decorate war cemeteries; the hope was that these international meetings would show the way to mutual learning for a better understanding and peace for future generations. The Peace Corps in the USA followed a similar idea. City sister-ships throughout the world are another example. Also, UNESCO and the World Bank are big players in this type of international adult education (see the contribution of Bray in this book). By taking my students to a conference in a foreign country, I invest these efforts in the hope of "making them more international" - which means learning practical techniques (developing language skills, making phone calls, and knowing how to find something to eat and a bathroom), as well as educating emotions and valuing (the reduction of stress and threat by "the

strange" and fostering the perception, valuing, and appreciation of "the different").

Certainly, this approach is both easier and more necessary in "old Europe," where foreign countries, languages, traditions, and historically-developed hate is, in many places, only minutes or a few hours away; the goal is to overcome the ethnocentricity of national borders. "Intercultural adult education" is a term that relates closely to this more practical, action-oriented understanding of international adult education. Intercultural education can happen in one country. Here the aims are activities and reflections that serve the understanding and peaceful cooperation between ethnic groups in a society (including the majority in this learning process). Thus the focus of international/intercultural education is the practical, action-oriented aspect of "educating adults in international perspectives."

5.2 International Comparative Adult Education: Academic, reflection-oriented

International comparative adult education - the center of this paper - has a different focus: it has a more academic, reflection-oriented perspective, it emphasizes a more theoretical approach, gaining knowledge and understanding about adult education in other countries, and is accomplished with some methodological rigor.

Knowledge about the education of adults in other countries can be gained from various sources, and several types of comparative research can be categorized as follows:

0. Travelers tales

A first source, rated often as "pre-scientific" and characterized as "subjective-impressionistic", are the reports given by international travelers. The first chapter of this article was written on this level. Such reports are delivered by traveling writers or vacationers, but also by scholars who attend a conference abroad and have to report to their funding agency, and simultaneously publish this report in a journal. More systematic descriptions are categorized as 'travelers reports' and less systematic 'travelers tales'.

Their value is considered to be ambivalent. On the one hand because of random observation and subjective description, it is argued that it is not clear how reliable and how representative the descriptions are. On the other hand the plea is made that, especially because of the subjective focus of eye witnesses, this type of report might possess a specific strength. The quality very much depends on the quality of the reporter. A scholar of adult education with international experiences, trained to reflect on his personal bias and knowing that different models and traditions exist, certainly may be seen to be more objective, reliable, and valid than a normal vacationer. A number of contributions in this book, when referring to "lessons learned" without using specific research

methods, use this access - and do in fact identify important learning insights. In the framework of a new appreciation of qualitative research, these reports may receive renewed interest.

1. Country reports, single nation studies

A first stage of scholarly international adult education was the country report. Country reports 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). "Adult Education in the Republic of . . ." is a typical title of this type of report. But the hope to use them as a basis for later comparison was seldom fulfilled. Too different were the approaches, the selection of the focus, or the data presented. These single nation studies were often presented under a specific perspective: "Single nation studies are directed almost entirely at foreign audiences" (Titmus, 1999, p. 37). Country reports were presented mainly during the 1970s and 1980s. They could be written by an author within the country or by a person from the outside - this fact making a clear difference which has not been researched yet. Some of these reports are rather impressionistic; others follow a well-developed outline and structure. An example of the renewed interest in country reports is the series of "Country Portraits" published by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) from 1997 on, presenting for example Greece, Switzerland, Spain, Finland, and Germany (in German and English).

2. Program reports, topic-oriented studies

Since attempts to describe a whole national system were seldom successful, program reports focus more narrowly on descriptions of adult education programs, institutions, and organizations in a distinct country. During and after the 1980s an increasing number of program reports were presented. Examples of this type can be found in the writing of Charters and Hilton (1989) or the case studies collected by Knox (1989). Included in this category (sometimes categorized separately) are the *topic-oriented studies* or the *problem approach*, in which not a program, but a certain topic or problem is discussed in the context of a nation. The observation in the ISCAE-conferences give the impression that there is a growing interest in this type of exchange: On the background of one country specific topics - for example aging or leisure time - are presented and discussed, but with a clear "message-of-invitation" to colleagues of other countries to engage and exchange, based on their national background.

Country reports, as well as program reports, topic-oriented studies, and the problem approach, are mostly more 'international' and less 'comparative'. Since only one country or program is presented, no comparable object is available.

Especially when an author presents his own country or program to a foreign readership in various countries, it is difficult for him to compare with another national system. If, for example, a German author describes a German program in an English publication, should he draw parallels to the English, Scottish, US-American, Canadian or Australian systems? This mostly leads to the consequence that readers have to draw the comparative conclusions themselves. As Titmus comments: "To make sense of these studies, readers will inevitably compare them with their knowledge of their own national provisions" (1999, p. 37).

3. Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition collects and presents data from two or more countries, but no explicit comparison - where are the similarities, what are the differences? - is given. These reports show that in country A we can observe X, while in country B we find Y. A quantifying approach to juxtaposition is offered by a series of statistical reports; another approach is descriptive, for example the German international volume of the *Handbuch der Erwachsenenbildung (Handbook of Adult Education)*, Leirman/Pöggeler, 1978) or Peter Jarvis' (1992) *Perspectives on Adult Education and Training in Europe*. Juxtaposition can also be topic- or problem-oriented when a topic is presented in a series of contributions from various countries. For example, Pöggeler's *The State and Adult Education* (1990) brings together a series of articles discussing the role of the state in different countries.

4. Comparison

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. ISCAE here uses the definition of its "founding father" Alexander N. Charters:

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)

This type of research can for example be found in the final chapter of Charters and Hilton (1989).

In this strict understanding, country reports and reports about programs or topics in one country are not a part of international comparative education. Furthermore, juxtaposition - the side-by-side placing of data and descriptions from two or more countries - is not at the stage of comparison. In the strict understanding, it is necessary that similarities and differences get explicitly worked out with some methodological rigor. While the more general interna-

tional aspect in adult education has a long tradition, only a small and limited amount of research into adult education has been done comparatively.

5. Field and method reflecting texts

These texts reflect the methods, strategies, and concepts of international comparison, and include 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. Research methods, problems, and pitfalls were a central focus of ISCAE's first conference and are documented in Reischmann/Bron Jr/Jelec (1999).

6. 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 (em) at Bochum University, Germany, is one of the key persons supplying such information.

Further reflections

For these different approaches we used the term "types" (and not "stages"). Certainly, in the history of comparative (adult) education times can be identified when one type was predominantly used and valued. But what can be proved through many conferences and publications, even in this book: All these types exist and are used today, representing different approaches in the collection of available methods for different intentions.

There is not yet a final answer to the question: Where does "international adult education" end and where does "international comparative adult education" begin? Addressing this question, Wilson uses the term "twin fields" and asks: "Comparative and International Education: Fraternal or Siamese Twins?" (1994, p. 449). In a strict sense, two discriminations seem to be clear - "Comparison" can only be done when at least two objects are available, and "International" means different countries. So an international comparative study has to refer to at least two countries. Charters and Siddiqui (1989) draw clear limits:

A study that compares two or more aspects of adult education in a single country is merely an instance of intra-national comparative adult education. Similarly, a study that describes one or more dimensions of adult education in two or more countries without comparing them is an example of international adult education, not of comparative adult education. (p. 5)

Following this strict definition many presentations, papers, and research should be more appropriately labeled as "international" rather than "comparative." This is true for the book in hand. Bray similarly states in his editorial introduction to the book with papers from the 11th World Congress on Comparative Education, held in Korea in 2001, "The fact that only one quarter of the articles explicitly take national level foci ... is indicative of a further paradigm shift in the field"

(Bray, 2003, p. 9). Confirming this shift we already cited Titmus (1999), respected British scholar in international comparative adult education, who offers a much less strict understanding of comparative research in adult education: "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" (p. 36). Similarly Knoll, a longstanding German expert in the international field, states that "very few pieces of research work that are - according to their self-definition - 'comparative' really deserve this attribution. They normally approach a phenomenon in a problem-orientated or in a country-monographic way without considering a tertium comparationis" (Knoll, 1999, p. 20). The scientific community will have to come to an agreement about this question. Looking back to the results of the "call for papers" in four ISCAE-conferences proves that many researchers prefer the "wider" understanding of "comparative adult education", thus confirming Titmus and Knoll.

Most researchers in comparative adult education agree that international comparative adult education is at a beginning stage. But activities, research, conferences, and literature prove that a lot of clarification already has been done, knowledge is available, and methods are developed (i.e. Bereday, 1964; Noah/Eckstein, 1969; Kidd, 1975; Leirmann/Pöggeler, 1979; Charters/Hilton, 1989; Charters/Siddiqui, 1989; Jarvis, 1992; Knox, 1993; Reischmann/Bron/Jelenc, 1999).

6. Difficulties and problems of international comparative work

It certainly is challenging and rewarding to get a wider view of our world through an international orientation, but there are also handicaps that hinder research in comparative adult education. Just to name some of them (for a more comprehensive description see Bron Jr in this book):

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 just a short period of time or work. The knowledge developed in comparative adult education is scattered in many places, languages, and countries. This 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.

Part of the continuity-problem is the regular *attendance at central international meetings*. Person-to-person contacts are essential in this field: "International Conferences Built Bridges" is one of the lessons learned in Henschke's contribution in this book. To enter this field and to stay in its

networks entails traveling and being visible. This visibility requires a considerable investment of time, energy, and money; additionally, the investment also has to be made in times when no comparative project is being carried out and no extra project money is available.

It is evident that international comparative research has *clearly higher costs*. It is time-consuming and not always successful to find foundations willing to support international projects. National foundations are often not interested in paying the costs of the foreign partner. My experience through ISCAE is that most conference participants attend on their own money, sometimes with some limited support from their university or foundations. Funding agencies should do more to not just assist international comparative research projects but especially to encourage and finance the possibility of bringing young scholars into this field.

An often discussed topic is how comparison can be done between *different cultures*: Are researchers knowledgeable enough to understand the aspects under study in a foreign cultural context? A number of the contributions in this book (and the 1999-ISCAE-publication) address this problem. The reality of international comparative studies show that this problem can not be "solved", but it 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*. Besides the cultural and linguistic problems (see Jütte, 1999), researchers have to cope with a number of practical problems: International communication takes place in English, but for the majority of the world, this is a foreign language. In discussions, this raises difficulties: native English speakers are always faster! Communicating – even more, publishing – in the foreign language takes many times more effort than in one's native context. Secretaries are often not trained to write English, so the researcher has to type everything himself. When making citations, the English literature is often not available in foreign libraries, and it makes no sense to refer to the knowledge and experience of non-English research literature, because this literature does not exist for the international readership. Thus researchers from non-English countries, when working in the international context, lose most of their national scholarly background that is based on their native language – content, theory, and methodology. When publishing, a native English speaker always has to be found for proofreading. On the other hand, native English speakers with no command of a foreign language always depend on more or less reliable translations – a wide open field for misunderstanding.

Of course, international comparative projects have *a lot more obstacles than research carried out in one country*. A foreign partner has to be found and has to be convinced to join a project. Many details have to be clarified before and during the research process and at the end for the publication; such discussion

requires continuous exchange. In most cases, one partner also carries an extra load of translation when the other partner does not speak his language.

Comparative research means a high investment of money, time, and effort. This is a problem especially for young scholars. When weighing the potential outcome of these investments for one's career, a scholar often finds it more beneficial to work at the national level.

7. Prospects

International adult education and international comparative adult education share the fate of many good ideas: everybody agrees that they are important, but not many are willing to take the load of the international work on their shoulders and purses. Experiences in international and international comparative adult education have been developed in many countries. The important task is to encourage continuing work in this field, building on previous results in order to develop these experiences further.

More international knowledge, respect, and understanding are certainly needed in today's world. The personal benefits of being a more "international" person include understanding, open mindedness, tolerance, and humility – and good times with good friends in many places in the world. Those working in international comparative adult education report how personally enriching and rewarding they experienced the wider world-view gained through an international orientation.

From a global perspective, learning from each other is an essential, basic necessity. The UNESCO *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education* (1997) put this perspective in words: "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" (Chapter 14).

International comparative adult education faces challenging perspectives – in theory and the field of practice.

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- www.ISCAE.org – International Society for Comparative Adult Education

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The Multifaceted Field of Comparative Education: Evolution, Themes, Actors, and Applications

The domain of comparative adult education can be viewed as a sub-field of the broad field of comparative education. This chapter is concerned with the broad picture. It begins with a historical focus which summarises aspects of evolution over the decades. It then remarks some of the practical reasons for undertaking comparative study. Within the field, international agencies are important actors, and the next section focuses on three of the most prominent bodies. Subsequent remarks identify the roles and orientations of academics, which may be contrasted with those of other actors in the field. The conclusion summarises some applications of the field.

Development of a Scholarly Field

It is commonly asserted (see e.g. Epstein, 1994; Van Daele, 1993) that the origins of comparative education as a clearly defined scholarly activity lie in 19th century France. Specifically, Marc-Antoine Jullien, who in 1817 wrote a work entitled *Esquisse et Vues Préliminaires d'un Ouvrage sur l'Éducation Comparée*, has been widely described as the 'Father of Comparative Education' (see e.g. Berrio, 1997; Leclercq, 1999). The field is then commonly considered to have spread to other parts of Europe and to the USA, before reaching other regions of the world. An alternative view might be that the field had multiple origins (Halls, 1990; Zhang & Wang, 1997; Bray & Gui, 2001); but it is undeniable that significant work was developed in Europe and the USA. During the 20th century, the field gathered momentum and spread. Nakajima (1916) published a book in Japanese entitled *Comparative Study of National Education in Germany, France, Britain and the USA*, which was translated into Chinese

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