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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

BRAY, M.; ADAMSON, B. & MASON, M.: *Comparative Education Research. Approaches and Methods*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Reserach Centre And Springer, 2007.

Reviewed by M. Jesus Martinez Usarralde, The Universidad de Valencia.

It is during the last few months that we witnessed revealing debates in the area of Comparative education, which, again, reaffirmed the perfect state of health this discipline is enjoying worldwide. I would like to offer three examples to this point:

The first one generated by Martin Carnoy in Comparative Education Review of November 2006 bears the thought-provoking title “Rethinking the Comparative – and the International”. In this article Martin Carnoy rediscusses the effects, which the discipline might have on the very researcher (possibly close to the ‘comparative mutuality’ by Epstein). In order to be able to do so he revises his own research development as well as the circumstances, which were responsible for his final commitment to Comparative Education. On the other hand, his *vulgata discursiva*, allows him to connect arguments on different theories of the discipline (although under the premises that “comparative analysis is a way of shaping theories, not a way of developing new theories”, p. 562 and 569): the theory of the state and the effects of globalization, postmodernism, as well as the way of linking theory and politics, etc. As a whole, this is without any doubt a rich, but above all, also a provocative contribution which has met with answers from authors like Arnove, Stromquist, Fox, Levin and many more who have supported this debate in its many shades of epistemology and, hence, in a technical and ideological sense, thus definitely providing an enhancement for the discipline as such.

The second example is also taken from Comparative Education of 2006, with regard to the ever-inspiring Schriever whose focus is on the historical consideration of the comparative, the social and the cultural sciences since the 19th century. He presents an anthology in which the theoretical and methodological topics of the discipline receive a strong and encompassing attention: Ringer, centering on causal explanation, Roldan & Schupp with the network analysis in comparative social sciences or Ramirez drawing attention on the study of efficiency in the sociology of Comparative Education – these are three outstanding examples to the point made above, in a volume that never loses its historiographic perception of the discipline, a fact which greatly contributes to its validity.

The final example which I want to give with reference to the revitalization of Comparative Education will be the anthology compiled by Bray, Adamson and Mason called *Comparative Education Research. Approaches and Methods*. There is more than one reason to congratulate, and, which is more, to thank the authors for giving birth to this text written in 16 chapters. From the

manifold motives, which I cherish for a recommendation of this book, I can only mention a few. There is, for a start, this fine balance between the quantity of the chapters and their absolutely pertinent discussion of the topics. Secondly, the simply edifying lesson that diversity will always enrich theory (given the fact that the examples, although taken from a Chinese background, are bound to be of interest to all the comparatists in the world, irrespectively of their country of origin). This may be due, thirdly, to the simple fact that this book takes great care in legitimizing the “continuum” of the discipline in distinct times and places. In my own book ‘Educación comparada. Nuevos retos, renovados desafíos’ (2003), I referred to the present, the past, and the future of Comparative Education reconsidering some of the classical and contemporary dilemmas as well as looking into some arguments on the importance of Comparative Education now and then, the international consolidation of Comparative Education and the future tendencies of the discipline. I am happy to acknowledge that this book’s arguments follow a similar and very creative line, thus giving credit to the ‘continuum’ referred to above. I already mentioned in my introductory remarks the historic perspective in authors, who were crucial in establishing the bedrock of Comparative Education like Bereday, Noah & Eckstein, King, Holmes, etc. They are also connected to perspectives of our century giving nourishment, as it were, to vital questions of our discipline which are centered, in this case, in the synchronic and diachronic solidity of American, English and also transnational contributions fostered by international organizations and leading to ‘geomorphic shifts’ (which, in a certain sense, recall the ‘transitologies’ by Cowen) in order to find possible future profiles. Having said that, and without contradicting the above mentioned spatial and temporal logical continuity, the content of chapter 15, written by Bray, carves out the significant weight which is given to the necessity of interdisciplinarity requiring the cooperation in comparative investigation. A situation like this urges the author to investigate most thoroughly the question involved: Does, now and here, Comparative education constitute a science? By recuperating the educology of Oliviera many arguments may be connected so that the answer has to be positive.

I would like to proffer a further argument which, in my opinion, is one of the most illustrating of this worthy and conclusive presentation: this book will spread new light on the proposals of analysis which exist in the field of Comparative Education, thus compensating for the deficit which, I believe, can be detected more often than not in the treatment of methodological questions on theory and epistemology. Indeed, the attention given to comparative methodology constitutes the very core of what we find in the book, starting from the claim that only “few studies compare” in a strict sense, which means employ the comparative method. The authors render a brilliant revision of these circumstances in chapter 16, ‘Different Models, Different Emphases, Different Insights’. In this chapter they not only explore the different models which coexist in comparative education research, founding their studies on the number of the units of comparison, they also actualize the interpretation of the multilevel ‘cubo’ created by Bray & Thomas for the purpose of collating different categories of

comparison, concluding by emphasizing the diversity on the one hand (the orientation employed by most comparatists in recent years) as well as the communalities on the other hand, which they have scrutinized. But there is still more evidence of the explicit interest in methodological questions: the second chapter (by Frairbrother) focuses on re-examining the topic of a classic debate: the utility and pertinence of quantitative versus qualitative analysis. In agreement with the theoretical perspective of this debate most of the second part of the book is concerned with the 'units of comparison' and offers an encompassing and rigorous analysis of this term, which, up to the present time, has not been achieved. New and significant questions are being raised:

What are we comparing? Places? (Mazón), systems? (Bray & Kay), times? (Sweting), cultures? (Mason), values? (Wing-on), educational achievement? (Postlethwaite & Leung), policies? (Rui), curricula? (Adamson & Morris), educational organizations? (Dimmock), ways of learning? (Watkins) or pedagogical innovations? (Law). It is worth while mentioning the extraordinariness of the proposal without forgetting its intrinsic utility: in each of the above mentioned chapters the reader is informed about the state of the question as well as on tendencies and recommendations which are not only significant for the analysis but also for future research work that contemplates the quoted 'tertium comparationis'.

If we add to all that the attention given to the 'personification' (by which should be understood the turning towards persons as objects of research also taking into account their environment and their experience), a characteristic trait of this book (be it chapter 1 by Bray giving priority to the protagonists of Comparative Education, be it the exquisite chapter by Potts on the importance of the 'experimental rucksack' all of us who call themselves comparatists will finally end up with), we hold a book in our hands no one could dispense with, and that is true for all of us whose interest lies in comparative education as researchers, but also as teachers, given that the elaborately didactic style also recommends itself to our students of comparative education in master, diploma or doctorate study courses.

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SEARS, J. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Gay, lesbian, and transgender issues in education: Programs, policies, and practices*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
Reviewed by Laura A. Bower (University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

James Sears' *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education: Programs, Policies, and Practices* provides an insightful glimpse into the possibilities available to and created by gay, lesbian, and transgender students and their advocates. The book documents many examples of youth and their adult allies finding and/or creating spaces where difference flourishes. This text, Sears' editorial selection from the first volume of *The Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, aims to remind readers "what is most important: educating a new generation of youth (regardless of sexual or gender identities) who are as empathetic for 'the other' as they are resilient and as tenacious for seeking social justice as they are courageous in being" (p. xxii). Narratives written by youth in New Zealand, Australia, the United States, China, and Japan, coupled with relevant reviews of literature, program evaluations, and empirical research wonderfully demonstrate the resilience and courage of many lesbian, gay, and transgender youth.

The first section of *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education* consists of a dialogue between gay and lesbian youth and scholars. This unique approach appeals to readers will all levels of expertise regarding gay and lesbian youth, from relative novices to veteran gay and lesbian scholars. Girls from New Zealand, Australia, and the United States and boys from China and Japan write of their experiences as gay and lesbian students. Scholars from Australia, the United States, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Zimbabwe provide commentary on these narratives. The original authors then respond to the commentaries. This dialogue serves to establish commonalities among experiences from disparate continents and cultures. The format serves as a refreshing way to present authentic youth voices in a systematic and scholarly fashion.

The primary theme of the narratives consists of conflicts between sexual orientation and the values of dominant cultures. While the exact taboos surrounding same-sex desire vary from country to country, each author's context establishes heterosexual marriage as a cultural mandate. The youth authors express a need to find others like them, frequently looking to popular media to fill this need. Popular media, specifically Western movies and television shows, in addition to the use of the Internet proves far more instructive and supportive to these youth than do schools. Schools in New Zealand, Australia, the US, China and Japan, in the experiences of the youth authors, celebrate heterosexuality through school activities, choices of literature, and the overall acceptance of homophobic comments. The youth authors also express great concern for others in like situations, concern that frequently served as an impetus to become involved in advocacy work.

Rather than focusing on the challenges they face, the authors in the first section highlight the possibilities of gay and lesbian youth finding each other and themselves through popular media, working towards better environments for

future students and claiming a sexual identity that is in opposition to dominant cultural values. The authors succeed in positioning gay and lesbian youth as agents of change rather than as victims of dominant cultures. Beyond establishing commonalities among gay and lesbian youth and scholars from several cultures, the dialogue between scholars and youth makes the content easily accessible to an audience not well versed in gay and lesbian studies. The first section of the book is also approachable for those who may be unfamiliar with reading empirical research reports. The stories told both by the youth and the scholars personalize gay and lesbian issues in education, connecting individual experiences with larger social issues. This dialogue capitalizes on the possibility of empowering gay and lesbian youth, making their voices heard in a meaningful way.

From the personal narratives, Sears' text moves into overviews of research and policy related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth's school experiences, highlighting the trials faced by these youth. If the first section of the book focuses on the resilience and courage of specific youth as they found possibilities and courage in the face of obstacles, this next section underscored the challenges faced. Research documents the high rates of harassment, bullying, and overt homophobia faced by gay and lesbian youth. These factors contribute to high rates of truancy, dropping out of school, and suicide attempts among LGBT youth. Authors of individual chapters discuss progress that has been made in making U.S. school climates better for students of all sexual orientations, as well as the work that remains to be done. This focus continues in the book's habit of focusing on possibilities rather than on challenges, a refreshing shift from previous literature that positions LGBT youth as powerless victims. This section provides important background for readers and will prove particularly useful to advocates of LGBT youth.

Youth are not alone in their discovery of possibilities. The final section of the book, intended for university personnel and program coordinators, demonstrates the effort of adults on behalf of LGBT youth. Brett Beemyn highlights ways some North American college campuses have met the needs of transgender college students and encourages others to follow suit. Patti Capel Swartz explains how she fights homophobia and heterosexism in the preservice teacher education courses she teaches in rural Appalachia. Bopp, Juday, and Charters describe a school based program for multicultural transgendered youth in Hawaii that shows empirical evidence of preventing HIV infection and lowering truancy and drug and alcohol use. Griffin, Lee, Waugh, and Beyer talk about the multiple roles Gay-Straight Alliances can play in schools, including counseling and support, providing a "safe" space for LGBT students and their friends, providing education related to LGBT issues at school, and serving as part of a broader school effort to make school safer for LGBT students. Finally, Lance Trevor McCready explores the intersection of race and sexual orientation, explaining the tendency of school programs to view gay and lesbian issues as pertaining primarily to White students.

The authors of each chapter in this section point to possibilities: the possibility of making schools more attuned to the unique needs of transgender

students, the possibility of making schools safer for LGBT students, the possibility of denormalizing Whiteness in conversations about gayness, and the possibility of raising awareness of gay, lesbian, and transgender issues on high school and college campuses. Those who work with LGBT youth and/or trainers of youth workers will benefit from reading of programs that successfully integrate and advocate for LGBT youth. The authors' challenges to consider race in discussions of sexuality, in addition to thinking through the unique needs of transgender youth prove particularly helpful.

Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education fulfills its promise to show the resiliency and courage of lesbian, gay, and transgender youth. These demonstrations of resiliency and courage transcend national boundaries, cultures, and genders. Owing to their inclusion of multiple voices, attention to intersections of ethnicity and sexuality, and focus on gay, lesbian, and transgender issues independently and as a whole, Sears and colleagues have created a meaningful text for broad audiences. I highly recommend this book for anyone who desires a deeper understanding of gay, lesbian, and transgender youth in multiple cultural contexts.

SPRING, J. (2006). *Pedagogies of Globalization, The Rise of the Educational Security State*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Pages: 308. ISBN: 0-8058-5556-4.

Reviewed by: Zahra Deborah Buttar, University of Nevada Las Vegas,

Joel Spring's *Pedagogies of Globalization* offers an historical and comparative analysis of twentieth century leaders and the development of their national educational programs. The book is organized into eight chapters that address global educational systems by region of the world, and by their system of government (communist, socialist, or capitalist). Specifically, Spring focuses on Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle Eastern countries. Although each nation and each leader are very different, many countries have mimicked each other in the development of what Spring refers to as "the educational security state model". The educational security state model, developed in response to the Cold War and replaced the progressive model of Dewey. The security state model emphasizes science and technology as a means of insuring national security, in tandem with the development of industrial consumerism. Although not stated in the text, I consider this model to be built largely on a fear of the other.

Much of the historical argument in the book centers on the development of civic education, the emergence of progressive forms of education and world industrial consumerism, and the current domination of English as a global language. Many of the twentieth century world leaders such as Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung and Ho Chi Min were discussed in detail as to their social/educational background and how that later influenced their educational policies, once world leaders. Spring traces how the progressive education model of Dewey shifted to the educational security state model in many countries, and concludes that an

alternative education model which will address the new world order, the industrial consumer paradigm and the global domination of the English language is desperately needed.

The book also discusses the colonial and post-colonial experience in various regions of the world, and each region or country is discussed historically with an emphasis on the development (or lack of) of educational models. Political engagement and avenues of capital were discussed in detail as to the development of educational models within each country. The colonial models implemented throughout Africa, the Middle East and the Subcontinent, were never abandoned and in fact, according to Spring, many are still intact today.

The book is an important and powerful read, although in my estimation, sections of Chapter Six, “Wars of Liberation and Formal Schooling” were somewhat disappointing. In this chapter Spring states that the postcolonial experience in predominantly Islamic countries involves a Christian Islamic conflict. In my opinion the conflict has always been primarily economic rather than religious in nature. The British were not solely Christian-promoting occupiers; they were primarily interested in natural resources, cheap labor and raw materials. Also even with the overthrow of British colonizers, Christian religious English language schools continue to comprise elite educational institutions throughout the region. I was also disappointed in that while Saudi Arabia is mentioned along with its model of incorporating Islam throughout the curriculum; no analysis of this model is given. Another omission is that Israel along with its educational model is never mentioned in the book. Israel as a religious based nation and of global prominence deserves a comprehensive historical, religious and educational analysis in comparing it to the Islamic, Hindu, and Christian models referred to throughout the text.

With regard to English, Spring is correct in asserting that English is used in most parts of the world, including most of the Islamic world is viewed as a status symbol and more importantly as Spring tells us, as a vehicle to global employment. English has therefore become a vehicle of capital, and not only a language. India and Pakistan both have English in the standard public school curriculum. Due to the social, global and capital value of English, nations are creating distinct dialects of English, as the language no longer belongs to one nation, (Chinglish, Spanglish) nor its past standardization.

Spring encourages reflection and urges academics to develop new paradigms in education and social awareness to combat these enemies. As educators we can begin by critically reflecting on our own work, the models of other countries and the policies of governments. His book makes a notable contribution to the field of education. It offers an extensive historical analysis coupled with a critical discussion of the contemporary circumstance and issues of the educational security state, global consumerism, and English as a global language.

In future, I would like Spring to include the emerging models of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Israel within his analysis. As new models throughout the world are developed and implemented, along with new countries, it will be

valuable to take note of the progress made by these models and countries. Nonetheless, this text is a must for academics of all disciplines that are interested in a historical and social perspective on critical contemporary educational issues. Finally I would like to add that Spring, at one point in his book, asks the question, "What happened to progressive education?" My answer is that, the security state model of education is kept alive through the perpetuation of fear leaving little room for the progressive model, let alone new models that are desperately needed.