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## Book Review: Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Paradigms

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Bray, M., Ed. (2003). *Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Paradigms*. Hong Kong: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Pages: 264. Price: 32.00 USD

Reviewed by Dr. Anthony N. Ezeife, University of Windsor.

With today's world, vast as it is in geographical terms and dimensions, progressively dwindling into a global village, it comes as no surprise to the interested observer that global education is rapidly assuming a central position in educational dialogue and interactions amongst educators and researchers. As the frontiers of knowledge expand, and communication between nations and peoples accelerate, diverse cultures meet and rub shoulders against one another as they jostle for recognition, and as each culture struggles to bring its message to the forefront. The World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), with a current membership of 30 national, regional, and language-based organizations, has served in its thirty-three years of existence, as a much-needed forum for bringing together researchers, educators, and scholars from all corners of the globe to share ideas and perspectives, and discuss educational practices and activities from far and wide.

Bray's book, *Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Paradigms*, is a rich assemblage of well researched articles that emanated from the 11<sup>th</sup> WCCES hosted by the Korean Comparative Education Society (KCES), and held at the Korean National University of Education, Chungbuk, South Korea in July 2001. The articles in the book are grouped into three interrelated themes that vigorously and painstakingly explore topical issues in comparative and international education, thus:

Theme 1: Conceptual and Methodological Approaches.

Theme 2: Political Forces and Comparative Education.

Theme 3: Cultures in Comparative Perspective.

Apart from the inviting titles of the articles in the various themes, what will further captivate the reader of the book are the engaging manner of discourse and the depth of each article. For example, writing on "The Future of Comparative and International Education in a



Globalised World”, Wilson (pp.15-33) draws the reader’s attention to the rapid developments in Information and Communications Technologies, the immense potentials in this field, and the obvious impact these would have on educational practices, and the economy in a globalised world. To ensure that potential readers actually comprehend the full meaning of globalisation (a word frequently used in the literature, but often vaguely understood), Wilson, citing Lubbers (1998), took pains to define the term. I find the definition particularly informative and instructional, and would like to share it with readers here. It states that globalisation is a process:

that widens the extent and form of cross-border transactions among peoples’ assets, goods, and services, and that deepens the economic interdependence between and among globalizing entities, which may be private or public institutions or governments (p.17).

When we digest this meaning of globalisation, we see at once how interrelated and interdependent citizens, corporations, and governments of the world have become, and how we now have a common stake in international affairs and the health of the world’s economy. For example, a sudden increase in the price of a barrel of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) crude oil immediately affects, not just the price at gas (petrol) stations all over the world, but also quickly translates into increased energy, production and manufacturing, heating and lighting costs, etc. Overall, the consumer, in whatever part of the world he or she may be, ultimately pays one way or another for price increases and inflationary trends and practices. That is a living example of globalisation. In a similar vein, educational practices and beliefs in one part of the world may have far-reaching implications for educational activities and outcomes in other parts of the world.

An issue that is fast gaining attention in educational and research circles is the abundance of knowledge and wisdom lying mostly untapped in indigenous societies and cultures scattered across the globe. In his article entitled “Appropriation, Appreciation, Accommodation: Indigenous Wisdoms and Knowledges in Higher Education”, Morgan (pp. 35-49) explores the issue, focusing on the differences between Western Science and “the Knowledges and Wisdoms of Indigenous Peoples in such places as Australia, South East Asia, Africa, and Central and South America” (p. 35). While

addressing the obvious limitations of Western Science, Morgan emphasizes the need for the recognition of the contributions of indigenous scientific expertise to modern-day scientific developments and inventions. He notes, for example, that some contemporary principles of aerodynamics originated from the “boomerang” – an invention of the Aboriginal Australian. The reader will find Morgan’s treatise quite remarkable and noteworthy as he clearly established the need for a new basis of interaction between Western and Indigenous cultures in the realm of higher education.

Several other articles in the book address such issues as the recent Transformation of Educational Policies in Central and Eastern Europe, the Educational Reform in Siberia and the Russian Far East, Primary Schooling in China and India, amongst others. The spread of the articles both in terms of content and geographical location is such that the reader will find some material that appeals to him or her, either because of the subject matter of an article, or the particular region of the world the article focuses on. Since the authors of the articles are educational practitioners based in the zones they are writing about, the reader is treated to authentic information and discourse emanating directly from source, so to say. All through the book, there are several data tables and appendices that carry current and valuable information. A researcher would definitely find these resources very useful because they span several continents and geographical zones of the world.

The book would be an excellent reading and research resource for a variety of groups. The general, information-seeking reader will find it useful because of its wide-ranging reach – it unveils such information tucked away in far-off corners of the globe that the reader cannot find in a regular text. The research-inclined graduate student or teacher will equally find the book appealing because of the comprehensive treatment given to each topic discussed, and the engaging scholarship and rich style of discourse that run through the text. This is a book that will hold a reader captive and fulfilled as he or she is nourished by its sheer wealth of content and geographical coverage. To further enrich a book of this nature, I would suggest that articles from parts of Africa be included in future compilations of presentations made at WCCES congresses.

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