

**The University of Edinburgh**  
**The Moray House School of Education**  
**School Postgraduate Studies Committee**

**11 March 2015**

**New Course Proposal: Comparative Analysis in Education**

Brief description of the paper

A new course proposal for Comparative Analysis in Education MSc

Action requested

For Comment and recommendations

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? No

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

Equality and diversity

Have due considerations been given to the equality impact of this paper Yes

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Originator of the paper

Dr Ellen Boeren

## COURSE DESCRIPTOR

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Course title – Comparative Analysis in Education

Level – MSc SCQF 11

Credits – 20 credits

School – Moray House School of Education

Course organiser – Dr Ellen Boeren

### Pre-requisites

This is an MSc level course and all students accepted to the MSc programme will have obtained a Bachelor's degree in the past. No specific pre-requisites are set for this course. During the course, students will adapt knowledge from their research methods courses within this course on Comparative Analysis in Education.

### Aims (what the course aims to achieve)

The course aims to provide student with a comprehensive overview of the theories and methodologies used in comparative education research. It includes an overview on (1) the models and frameworks used to define comparative education, (2) the tools available for sampling and measuring within comparative education (3) the research methodologies applied to conduct comparative research.

The course will enable students to critically evaluate the soundness of research in the field of comparative education.

### Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. recognise the key challenges and issues of conducting comparative education research,
2. recognise the major streams, models and classifications used in comparative education research,
3. recognise the tools available for sampling and measuring in comparative education research,
4. design sound research questions and designs that can be used in comparative research methods,
5. evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research published in the field of comparative education.

Indicative course content – should outline the key sections and a flavour of course content, but not fix too many details

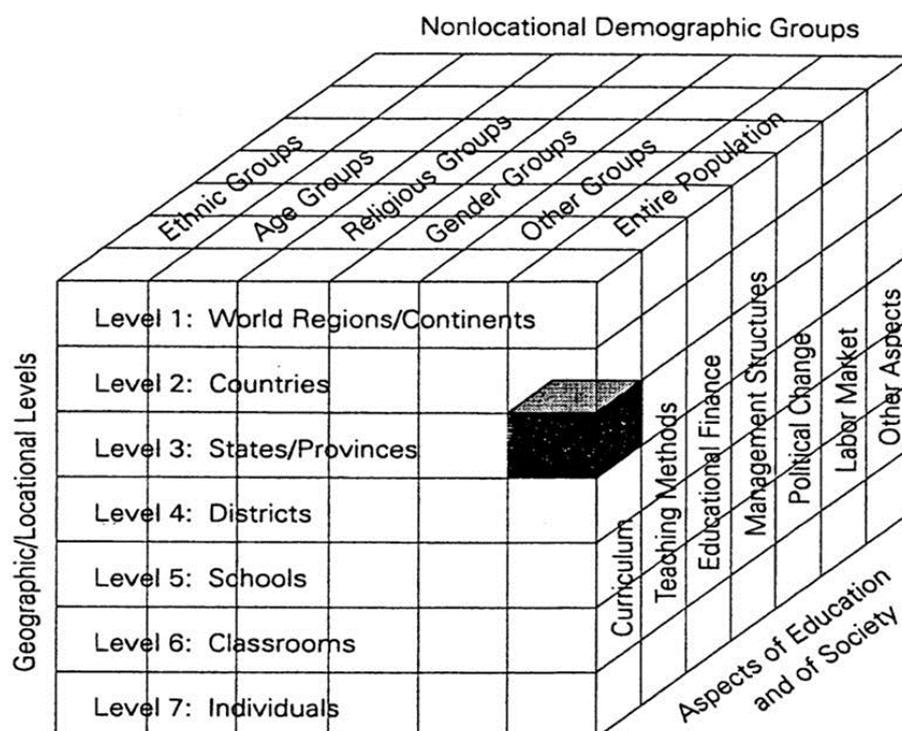
### **SESSION 1**

Session 1 will mainly focus on aims, theories and models of comparative education. Apart from setting out the learning objectives for the entire course, the first session will be used to introduce and discuss the core definitions of 'comparative' education and the mainstream comparative models such as Lor's Comparative Research Design Model (variable versus case oriented designs), Theisen and Adams' Classification of Comparative Research (analytical, descriptive, evaluative and exploratory) and Bray and Thomas' Comparative Framework (see Figure below).

The first session will be used to explain the differences between international and comparative education as comparative education does not automatically refer to international education. It refers to comparisons between groups, but also to comparisons over time.

*'In the social sciences and humanities, 'comparative research' is the term widely employed to describe studies of societies, countries, cultures, systems, institutions, social structures and change over time and space, when they are carried out with the intention of using the same research tools to compare systematically the manifestations of phenomena in more than one temporal or spatial sociocultural setting.'* (Hantrais, ICR, 2009, p. 2)

Figure: framework Bray & Thomas



## SESSION 2

In the second session, we will work on examples of comparative education, applying the content of Session 1. We will analyse journal articles that contain a comparative element. A range of articles will be chosen in order to reflect the differences as discussed in the models and classifications in Session 1. Group work will be used to analyse specific articles in-depth, and to present the results of group work to the rest of the group.

## SESSION 3

In this session, we will focus on the importance of the sample and of selection the groups to be compared in the comparative research. Several tools to inform the sample selection will be discussed, such as the role of welfare typologies in order to select countries, the concept of statistical neighbours to explore similar or different counties, provinces or Local Authorities, the role of school and university rankings, tools available to classify workplaces and industries, ...

#### **SESSION 4**

This session will be used to focus on the importance of standardised measurements and concepts. We will discuss the need for formulating concepts that will be understood in the different selected groups. Also, we will discuss standardised measurements and coding schemes used in comparative research. Examples include the ISCED classification, the Goldthorpe class schema, the ISCO-88 classification, standardised achievement tests. This session will therefore reflect on issues such as validity and reliability.

#### **SESSION 5**

Comparative education does not only refer to comparing between groups, but also to comparing the same groups over time. During this session, we will explore various existing longitudinal studies in the field of education, and will focus on various types including case studies, life course perspective studies, birth cohort studies and biographical studies.

#### **SESSION 6**

This week, we will be focussing on research aims, objectives and questions. Students will work in small groups and will chose a research topic, formulate research questions, and defend the choice of their sample. Practical guidelines will be introduced to enable structured presentations during the final part of the workshop.

#### **SESSION 7**

This session will be used to work with examples of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies in comparative education. Based on journal articles, three different types of studies will be introduced, analysed and discussed. Core work by Ragin 'the comparative method: moving beyond quantitative and qualitative research' will be used as a core guidance within this session.

#### **SESSION 8**

This week will be used to work on research design and methods. In this session, students will return to their Session 6 groups and will expand their research project, introducing a sound research design and method in order to answer their research questions.

#### **SESSION 9**

Session 9 will be used to introduce and discuss a range of comparative analytical techniques, including t-tests and ANOVA's for quantitative research, and the qualitative comparative method for qualitative research. Existing research examples will be explore.

#### **SESSION 10**

The last session will be used to revise the previous nine sessions and to answer remaining questions of students, and to provide answers and detailed information regarding the final assignment.

Teaching methods – including an hourly breakdown (eg between lectures, independent study, lab work etc, specifying whether or not it is contact or flexible time) – also provide a total to show the number of notional student hours (which generally accords with the credits for the course)

Teaching will usually be spread over 10 weeks and will consist of 10 blocks of 2.5 contact hours per week. Each session might start with an introductory powerpoint presentation, including exploration of websites and Youtube videos from official organisations (e.g. OECD Education Channel). The majority of the time of the contact sessions will be used to engage in critical reflections on selected materials, group work and discussions.

<i>Study activity</i>	<i>Time commitment [hrs]</i>
Face-to-face teaching-learning activities	25
Pre-course reading and preparation	60
Feedback/feedforward	5
Collecting and consulting other materials	30
Preparation and writing assignment	80
Total	<b>200h</b>

Assessment methods and weighting– also including percentage breakdown (eg between coursework and exams)

Students will have to assess a piece of research in the field of comparative and international research. The course organiser will make a selection of publications that recently appeared in the leading journals in the field (e.g. Globalisation, Societies and Education; Compare; Comparative Education, but also psychological and sociological education journals). Students will be asked to engage in a critical evaluation of the research methods used, as well as to demonstrate their critical reflection on the models and frameworks used across the sessions of the course.

Indicative resources – examples of key texts and other resources

\*All journal articles used in the course as examples will represent articles published in the last 3 years before the course. The reading list will be updated regularly.

Beech J. (2006). The theme of educational transfer in comparative education: A View over time. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 1(1), 2-13.

Bray, M., Adamson, B. & Mason, M. (eds) (2007). *Comparative education research: approaches and methods*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

- Bray, Mark & Thomas, R. Murray (1995): Levels of Comparison in Educational Studies: Different Insights from Different Literatures and the Value of Multilevel Analyses, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol.65, No.3, pp.472-90.
- Broadfoot, P. (2000). Comparative education for the 21st Century: retrospect and prospect. *Comparative Education*, 36(3), 357-371.
- Dale, R. & Robertson, S. (2009). *Globalisation and Europeanisation in education*. London: Symposium Books.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Epstein, E.H. (1994). Comparative and international education: overview and historical development. In: T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite,(eds) *International encyclopedia of education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, p.918-923.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics*. London: SAGE.
- Halls, W.D. (ed.) (1990). *Comparative education: contemporary issues and trends*. Paris: UNESCO and London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hantrais, L. (2008). *International comparative research: theory, methods and practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan.
- Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, J. & Warner, U. (2014). *Harmonising demographic and socio-economic variables for cross-national comparative survey research*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Lor, P. (2011). Methodology in comparative studies. In: Lor, P (Ed.) *International and Comparative Librarianship*. Online available at: <http://peterlor.com/the-book/>
- Noah, H.J. & Eckstein, M. (1998). *Doing Comparative Education: Three Decades of Collaboration*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Raffe, D. (2007). Learning from 'home international' comparisons: 14-19 policy across the United Kingdom, In: D. Raffe and K. Spours (eds) *Policy making and policy learning in 14-19 education*. London: Bedford Way Papers, University of London Institute of Education, pp.133-156.
- Ragin, C. (1987). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press 1987.
- Theisen, G. & Adams, D. (1990). Comparative education research. In R.M. Thomas (Ed), *International comparative education: practices, issues and prospects*. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Wadsworth, M. & Bynner, J. (2011). *A companion to life course studies: the social and historical context of the British Cohort Studies*. London: Routledge.

### Strategy for monitoring and review

At the end of this course, students will be asked to complete an evaluation form. The final session will usually be left open in order to assess areas in which students need extra support in order to fulfil the course objectives. Every year, the course will be evaluated and redesigned based on previous experiences of students, and incorporating new learning materials.