

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

28 January 2015

New Course Proposal: Comparative and International Education

Brief description of the paper

This is the proposal for an option course for students studying on MSc Education.

Action requested

For comment and approval

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? No

Risk assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

Equality and diversity

Does the paper have equality and diversity implications? No

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Any other relevant information

No

Originator of the paper

Dr Ellen Boren

COURSE DESCRIPTOR

Course title – Comparative and International 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.

Aims (what the course aims to achieve) – generally 1-2 aims

The course aims to provide student with a comprehensive overview of the theories, policies and methodologies used in comparative and international education. It includes an overview on (1) the history of and differences between international and comparative education, (2) the role of leading organisations in the field of international and comparative education and (3) the research methodologies applied to conduct international and comparative research.

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

Learning outcomes (what the student will be able to do upon completion of the course) – generally 5-7 separate learning outcomes, but this does vary

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

1. recognise the key challenges and issues of conducting comparative and international education,
2. identify the major policy influences and ideas of institutions like the European Commission, OECD and UNESCO,
3. predict countries' educational performances through exploration of social and economic factors like GDP and social welfare systems
4. examine the strengths and weaknesses of large scale surveys like PISA, PIAAC, PIRLS, ... used in comparative and international educational research,
5. design sound research questions that can be answered using international and comparative research methods,
6. evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research published in the field of comparative and international education.

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

SESSION 1: Introducing the field of comparative and international education.

Apart from setting out the learning objectives for the entire course, the first session will introduce students to the core concepts of 'comparative' and 'international'

education and will draw upon theories explaining the relationship between 'comparative' and 'international' education as explored by theorists such as Epstein and Halls.

SESSION 2: History and importance of comparative and international education.
The second session will provide a comprehensive overview on the different stages through which comparative and international education has developed. This session will be organised around Noah and Eckstein's 'five stages' model and will engage with Fraser and Brickman's writings on the history of comparative and international education.

SESSION 3: Education and globalisation

While national policies are still responsible for education, a shift has taken place towards a stronger desire for standardisation across education systems. In this session, students will be introduced to Dale and Robertson's work on globalisation and education, and on how education became an important player in the neo-liberal market.

SESSION 4: Organisational influences – part 1: European Commission and OECD
Comparative and international education is largely influenced by major organisations which provide guidelines for the effectiveness of policies in various national contexts. This session will focus on the work of the European Commission and the OECD.

SESSION 5: Organisational influences – part 2: UNESCO and the developing world
This session is similar to session 4, but will focus on the work of UNESCO and on work undertaken in the developing world.

SESSION 6: The relation between education policies and welfare regimes

Education policies differ across the world, but patterns can be recognised according to the geographical, social, cultural and economic characteristics of countries. This session will introduce students to the use of the social policy literature (e.g. Esping-Andersen in the European context).

SESSION 7: Using surveys in comparative and international education

Having introduced leading organisations like the European Commission, OECD and UNESCO, this session will be used to explore the content, outcomes and impact produced by major surveys organised by these organisations (e.g. PISA, PIRLS, PIAAC).

SESSION 8: Methods of comparative and international education research

Exploration of surveys leads to the need of exploring the alternatives available in designing research questions and methods usable in comparative and international research. This session will explore Ragin's work on the comparative method and provide discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of diverse research approaches used in comparative and international research.

SESSION 9: Policy borrowing and learning in the field of comparative and international education

This session will introduce students to the differences between policy borrowing and policy learning and how policies analysed in the previous sessions are developed in

order to put peer pressure on countries in order to let countries adapt and change towards the best performing countries in the world.

SESSION 10: Open session

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 be spread over 10 weeks and will consist of 10 blocks of 2.5 contact hours per week. Each session will 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 | 200h |

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). 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 country and organisational context (e.g. European countries and the European Commission) discussed within the paper.

Indicative resources – examples of key texts and other resources

Core text:

Phillips, D. & Schweisfurth, M. (2007). *Comparative and international education: an introduction to theory, method and practice*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Additional resources:

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.

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.

Fraser, S.E. & Brickman, W.W. (1968). *A history of international and comparative education: nineteenth-century documents*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company.

Halls, W.D. (ed.) (1990). *Comparative education: contemporary issues and trends*. Paris: UNESCO and London: Jessica Kingsley.

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.

Strategy for monitoring and review

At the end of this course, students will be asked to complete an evaluation form. As it is the first time the course will be taught, the final session will 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.