

Critique Beyond Criticism of Comparative Education by Critics

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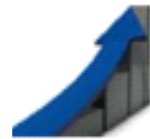
Abstract

Comparative Education is a discipline and a profession that has gone through series of criticisms by critics. For not understanding the functionalities and the benefits derivable from the study of the discipline should not give critics necessary opportunity to criticize it. It is on this note that effort was gear towards correcting the wrong perception held by critics. The notion that CE is either Arts, behavioural science or science was laid to rest by saying that it is fall in the realm of science due to the use of scientific methods in the research, generalisation and objectivity of the findings. Similarly, the assertion that the discipline does not have academic association and that it does not use none robust statistical tools such as quantitative, qualitative methods were dismissed. Rather, this researcher demonstrated that Comparative Educationists do adopt in its research chi-square, thematic, narrative analyses in conducting its research. Therefore, CE does not deserve severe tongue lashes it has gone through in recent times.

Keywords: Beyond, Comparative, Education, Criticism, Critics, Critique

Introduction

This researcher is an expert in Comparative Education (CE), has written a lot in the field and has attended both national and international conferences. During conversation with other professionals from other disciplines such as law, sociology, medicine, engineering, psychology, to mention but a few, the position of CE has always been criticized of belonging to a field of study that borrow its content from other disciplines. Aside from the above assertion, it has always been questioned why experts in the field of CE always internationalized their study when there are myriads of problems that faces education sector in Nigeria which needs to provide solutions to. Lastly, CE has to been subjected to criticism of belonging to Arts discipline instead of widely known science. Similarly, this researcher is often in state of compunction as to why colleagues from other disciplines criticize CE in spite of great fortune made from the field. Therefore, to set this mush talk about issues to rest, this necessitated the researcher to present these topical issues one after the other. Based on the aforementioned issues, the researcher would examine the conceptualization of CE as presented by scholars in the field in order to arrive at a workable definition of the discipline in question. Additionally, the issue of the professionals only focusing



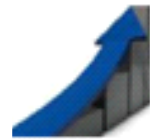
only ‘emphasizing’ on comparison in CE would be teased out for the audience to understand why it is like that. In the like manner, the researcher will advance reason why CE is regarded as a science discipline, rather than arts. Finally, afford will be geared towards discussing four methodologies apply in any CE research work.

Comparative Education: Define

CE is one of the compulsory disciplines which is offer in Nigerian universities by the education students. The discipline has been defined and re-defined over the years by Comparative Educationists. In fact, there are various conceptualisations of CE as there are theorists. Based on the myriads of definitions, there is no consensus regarding the conceptualisation of CE as there are diverse experts in the field. In spite of the above narrative, it is worthy of note to express few meanings of the discipline as propounded by various scholars. Adeyinka (1994, p.4) says that “it is the study of two school systems or more countries, and of the administrative machineries set up to implement or to control the implementation of government policies at various levels of education systems.” Similarly, Wolhuter (2011) see CE as “fully established academic field of study that examines education in one country (or group of countries) by using data and insights drawn from the practices and situation in another country, or countries.” Furthermore, Marshall (2024) defined CE as “the field of education that analyses the education system of a country by using data and systems from other countries, and designs policies to improve education.” Having looked at various meanings of CE, it is worthy to say that the commonality derivable from each meaning of CE is based on the notion of ‘comparison’ of education system of two or more countries.’ In light of the above assertion, one is compelled to argue that it is possible to compare on only two or more things, not one thing because an object with the same object. In other words, it is rather acceptable to say that there is nowhere one can compare one system of education with the same education system. Rather, one needs to compare one education system of a country with other country or countries.

Comparative Education: Why focus on comparison?

It has been questioned in many quarters by critics, why do CE mainly focus on ‘comparison.’ Critics further submitted that there are issues confronting education in Nigeria to resolve, instead of looking at other countries’ education system and its dynamics. In putting this argument to rest, it is important to argue that the basis for the comparison is to draw a valid conclusion of the functionality and workability one system over the other and its adoption to the country whose system is not working or working or need improvement (Wolhuter, 2008; Powell, 2020). Aside from reason advanced above, Hans (2012) said that the main reason CE focus on comparison is to enable people understand the education system and apply it on other one that need reform. Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi (2021) is of the view that CE focus on ‘comparison’ because dynamics such as economy, religion, politics, geography, statistics international relations,



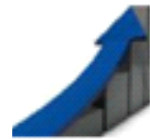
among others do shape education system of a country. Therefore, if these dynamics are there in another country where education is bad shape, it should be able to ‘tinker’ with it for the betterment of the country.in question. Similarly, Bray (2014) said that CE is principally focus on ‘comparison’ based on the fact that the contemporary world is characterized by a big quest for knowledge, peace, equality and better life.

Therefore, it is only in CE that these qualities would be guaranteed due to internationalization of its contents. Tikly (2015) argued that it is only in CE that peace and harmony among countries can be achieved due to the establishment of international relationship with other countries. Similarly, one is forced to argue that CE is the only discipline that bring about unity among nations as result of the importation of its content from one country to another. For instance, an expert in CE will seek and obtain a visa to travel to the country he/she intends to conduct research work. The host country and the country the researcher(s) intend to travel to conduct research must have had bilateral relationship before the embassy could issue a visa. In other words, the travelling visa may not be issued to the researcher(s) if there is bilateral relationship between the two or more countries. From all indications, one may agree that no discipline is taught or learnt in the university environment that promote unity, peace and harmony like CE.

The Concepts of CE in Art, Science or Behavioural Science

The issue of CE belonging to art discipline has raised by critics. However, one wonder why the location of this discipline in arts is a course of concern to critics, when the discipline is ‘cloth’ with science related garments. In response to the critics, the researcher is compelled to say that a ‘system’ cannot function effectively without other organ(s). There should be another or other organs that function inter-connectively with others before the ‘system’ is functional. In the like manner, CE borrow from other disciplines to makeup its content. Adeyinka (1994) held that “CE is an interdisciplinary discipline which rely with other disciplines to be able to accomplish its objectives.” However, these disciplines include; History of Education, Philosophy of Education, Sociology of Education, Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Psychology, Statistics, Literature, Political geography, Political science, Citizenship Education, Gender Studies, International relations and Political Economy. Therefore, one may readily conclude that CE is a dynamic discipline which gather its content mainly from science related disciplines, hence, it be seen as a science.

In another circumstance, CE is regarded as a science discipline because most notable comparative educationists such as Kandel, Han, Marshall, Chen, Zhang and Chen among others conducted their empirical works about other countries’ education system which has been generalised. Furthermore, Higginson (1999) has already argued that no serious researcher can conduct any research without the laboratory or going field for the research study. It therefore



concluded that the finding of such research would be shadowed and cannot be generalized. In agreement to the above assertion, Hanson, Barreiro, Crosetto and Brockington (2024) said that any researcher either in qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods who does not visit the field is in the course of conducting his/her research is wasting time because the findings from the said research would not be credible and valid.

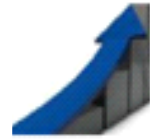
CE may not use laboratory as its counterparts in other science related disciplines. Rather, it looks at education issue(s) critically, that is, the genesis, dynamics, the possibility or otherwise of its reoccurrence and the impact it would have on the country education system. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis in using quantitative method to conduct research work in CE. For instance, Holmes (1984). Bray, Adamson, and Mason (2014), Reale (2014) Brent Edwards Jr (2025) to mention but few, have conducted empirical study using quantitative method.

Moreover, the adoption of structural functionalism from sociology and human theory in economics had a considerable impact on CE. In fact, CE adopts some theoretical concepts from other disciplines which are science oriented such as medicine, psychology, building construction, among others to makeup its own. In other words, it is pertinent to say that CE really flourishes significantly during this era of digitalization and as such it is regarded as a 'science discipline' (Wolhuter, O' Sullivan, Anderson, Wood, Karras, Mihova, Torres, Anangisy, Maarman, Hamood, Al-Harthi and Thongthaw, 2011). In fact, all research works done by the experts in the field of CE mainly use the conventional method of conducting empirical research in science discipline. In light the above discourse, the audience agrees that CE is located in science discipline irrevocably.

No Academic Association

Another important criticism in which critics negatively displayed in public domain is that CE does not have international associations like other disciplines, therefore, it should cease to exist in the university environment. This position advanced by the critics is unfortunate, sad and outright display of phobia and ignorance about the discipline's trend of growth since its inception. To keep the record straight in this matter, it is worthy to note that university-run academic association is vital to the development of any academic field in the university environment. In light of the above, CE has experienced substantial growth since its inception as a result of the introduction of academic association. For instance, in 1956, the first professional body, that is, Comparative Education Society (CES) was introduced. Similarly, few years after the establishment of the body, the name of the association was changed in 1968 to Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). This association played an important role in advancing CE world over. In another circumstance the association was the largest and had diverse nationals, regionals, and linguistic members all over the world. In supporting above assertion, Epstein (1994) opined that of the association was an avenue intellectuals brainstorm on a number of issues that related CE.

In another circumstance, Columbia University played an important role in the launching other associations in the field of CE. For instance, the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE) which was launched in 1961. This association developed series of national and regional 'sections',



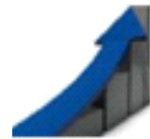
which functioned as mini organizations. Some of the sections such as the francophone, eventually evolved into independent associations with their own meetings and administrative structures (Epstein, 2013). However, this researcher is compelled to mention some of the notable bodies in CE and there are;

1. Argentinean Society of Comparative Studies in Education (SAECE)
2. Association of Pedagogues of Cuba – Comparative Education Section (APC-EC)
3. Brazilian Society of Comparative Education (SBEC)
4. Mexican Society of Comparative Education (SOMECE)
5. Uruguayan Society of Comparative and International Education (SUECI)
6. Venezuelan Society of Comparative Education (SVEC)
7. Comparative Education Society of India

In fact, it is truism to submit that these associations annually organised conferences which bring together education researchers and scholars from across the world to present papers on different topical issues that relate to the theme(s) of the conference, eventually enhances the institutionalization of CE as an academic field.

Methodological Debates

There is a strong criticism of CE on the methodological usage in research work. Critics is of the view that there are only two methods in conducting any research in CE, that is, borrowing and descriptive stages. This assertion by the critics should be disregarded based on the fact that the discipline has gone through series of transformation over the past three decades. Based on the transformative disposition, the discipline has five methodologies of conducting research. Before the explanation of these five phases, let us should look at the terms ‘method’ and ‘methodology’ which has been intertwined. In fact, this does not pose a challenge to sort them out in an understandable manner, therefore, it is important that we do this now in order to make better sense of the field of CE and its research processes. The main challenge is that scholars often use the term ‘method’ in reference to all aspects of research, whereas, they refer to ‘methodology.’ Here, method is simply the procedure a researcher use to accomplish an objective, whereas, methodology is the underlying approach used in the research study. Based on the above clarification of the concepts, in this paper we would be talking about methodological consideration in CE. There are five phases of methodology which are illustrated below;



Borrowing methodology

The first of phase of methodology happened when people like Marc-Anthony Jullien de Paris, Mathew Arnold of England, Victor cousin of France, Leo Tolstoy, K.D. Aushinsky, Domingo Sermiento, Horace Mann and Henry Barbard began the study of CE. During this period, these experts physically visited the country they are to conduct the research, thereafter, they borrowed those educational practices that were relevant and implement it in their country. According to Lawal (2004), there was application of modern methods of research such as chi-square, thematic analysis or narrative as presently used. In other words, experts in the field were not abreast on how to use quantitative method or qualitative method to resolve education problem, rather, they only conduct research based on physical observation of educational phenomena under investigation.

Descriptive methodology

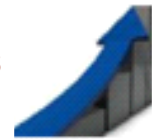
The educational comparativists involved in this stage included people like Friedrich Schneider, Franz Hilker, Isaac Kandel, Robert Ulich, Nicholas Hans, Joseph Lanwerys and Pedro Rosselo. They tried to described the country's educational practices visited. During this period, experts helped to show the differences and similarities that existed in the education practices in that country. Moreover, they (experts) equally to try be more careful in transplanting these education practices from that country to another (Wolhuter, Espinoza & McGinn, 2024). Additionally, the use of robust statistical tools in the field was limited. Based on the above discourse, it is worthy of note that this phase did not bring about externalisation of major education reforms in a variety of countries in the world (Wolhuter, 2024).

Scientific or analytical phase

The third stage can be regarded as the scientific or analytical methodology. This stage took place during second half of the 20th century. The methodology witnessed rigorous analysis as well as objectivity in the study of educational practices of other countries. Furthermore, quantitative method was also used to look at any phenomenon under investigation. After the usage of this method, the educational findings are therefore transplanted in another country. One important issue in this method is that scholars do use computer accessories to compute data. Similarly, there is application of serious statistical tools in the study of research problem. Also, researchers in the field used multiple data to arrive at the findings of their research. For instance, Kamani (2021) adopted autobiography as data collection method in his Doctoral Degree thesis in CE.

Digitalisation methodology

The current methodology happening in CE is the digitalisation process. This involves the use of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods in conducting research work in CE. In this phase, the researcher in CE does not need to visit the foreign country(s) to conduct research, rather,



desktop research, telephone interview, zoom, facebook, and other network devices are used in this direction. Based on the introduction of these devices, it does not take longer period such as a year to conduct research work. In addition to above notion, research conducted within this period is 'injected' with heavy doses of analysis. According to Rashidovna and Nodira (2024), the application of contemporary paradigms like phenomenology, chi-square, ethnography, narration, among others significantly enhance CE as a lively discipline which should which should be encouraged, instead of subjecting it to unwarranted of criticisms which are unnecessary.

Conclusion

CE as a field of study and a profession is crucial in the university system like medicine, law, engineering, sociology, to mention but a few. Though, many people who dreads the discipline is because of its wider scope. However, this does not play CE in irrelevant position in the contemporary world. In fact, many reforms that happens in education sector today world over is as a result of dynamic nature of CE. Therefore, it is important to look at CE as a discipline which bring positive change to education sector. Afterall, Akpan (2024) argued that despite of the phobia and criticism by students and other professionals towards discipline, it is appropriate to say that CE is necessary in the contemporary era due to its revolutionization, innovative and internationalization dispositions.

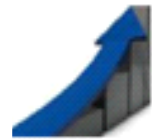
Suggestions

It is obvious that the author of this paper has able to address the criticism one after the other and thereby suggested that;

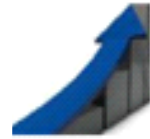
1. Since CE is in the realm of science discipline, it should be treated as such and all educational facilities that can enhance the productivity of the professionals should be put provided.
2. Other professionals in other disciplines such as sociology, law, physics, statistics, among others should collaborate with CE to conduct researches. In fact, findings of such collaborative research will be valid, reliable and can be generalized.

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