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COMPARATIVE EDUCATION FOR THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF TEACHING MODELS AND THE RENEWAL OF EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

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Abstract: The text analyzes the challenge of learning “with or about other” intra- and international educational systems, aiming to identify and understand some characteristics of the Comparative Education method. In this sense, based on bibliographic research, stimulated by Deveschi, Tauchen and Trevisan (2018), it highlights two main elements: (i) the global interconnection of educational systems, which, in the midst of globalization, often transfers models without considering local contexts, favoring exclusive interests; and (ii) the use of student performance data in tests to justify social balance. The bibliographic survey revealed that Comparative Education stimulates, transforms and reconciles educational experiences, based on the investigation of the communicative process that takes place in different spaces, times and contexts. The work proposes renewing educational discourses and promoting practical exchanges between different educational contexts. The method focuses on understanding the differences between national and international educational systems.

Keywords: comparative education; educational systems; globalization.

INTRODUCTION

This writing is part of the construction process of the master's thesis for the Postgraduate Program in Educational Sciences at the Inter-American Faculty of Social Sciences (FICS) and provides support for an analysis of questions about learning “with” or “about” intra- and international educational systems, according to the comparative research method.

In order to identify and understand the qualities of Comparative Education that are relevant to this study, a bibliographical search was carried out in physical and digital scientific publications. The texts chosen include authors who promote learning from the educational experiences of others, succinctly highlighting the dialog between different perspectives

The central goal of this publication is to explore the historical path of comparative studies, highlighting the motivations that culminated in the formalization of the Comparative Education method and emphasizing how this discipline has evolved from an analysis focused on specific educational systems to a broader understanding of the interactions between local and global contexts.

BRIEF HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

Comparative Education had its first manifestations in Europe at the end of the 18th century, but was consolidated as a scientific method at the end of the 19th century, with the work of Marc-Antoine Jullien of Paris, “*Outline and Preliminary Notions of a Work on Comparative Pedagogy*”. The text set out to understand the characteristics and influences of the educational systems of different countries in order to establish fundamental precepts and regulations in education, underpinning the belief in the possibility of identifying and transferring educational solutions between nations in a scientific manner (NÓVOA, 2017)

The method was consolidated with the creation of organizations such as the League of Nations' International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (CICI) in 1922 - which aimed to internationalize intellectual production - and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1945, which promoted education and drew up public policies aimed at world development and peace (OLENDER, 2020).

Over time, Comparative Education has evolved by incorporating functional and interdisciplinary analyses. Its focus was broadened from merely guiding pedagogical reforms to encompassing practices that analyze teaching methods, educational policies and pedagogical results in diverse cultural and social contexts (FERREIRA, 2008; PEIXOTO, SILVA;

SALOTTI, 2021). To go beyond the context of national education systems, it has considered the particularities of peoples, cultures, economies and politics. This approach began to promote reflection on the reasons that link a given system to a specific location, deepening the analysis of the “whys” and influences that customs and society exert on education (PEIXOTO; SILVA; SALOTTI, 2021).

In its recent document *“Rethinking education: towards a global common good?”*, UNESCO emphasized the need to rebuild education as a common good. In this context, Comparative Education is positioned as an essentially in tackling fragmentation and strengthening the sense of community, contributing to the solution of local and global problems (NÓVOA, 2017).

In order to understand this need to develop a collective awareness of living in society and collaboration between its members, it has been necessary to revise concepts in Comparative Education research. Solutions or generalizations that previously catered for diverse realities in different countries have been replaced by values that recognize the complexity and specificity of each context and are present in the act of learning with or about differences.

It is the historical point of view, the intelligibility, the meanings that are attributed to a set of realities that we seek to find, as a priority, as investigative findings. From this perspective, Comparative Education research presents itself, on the one hand, as an epistemology and, on the other, as an investigative methodology (ZUCCHETTI, 2019, p. 350).

In the epistemological field, Zucchetti (2019), based on Nóvoa (2017), explains that the meaning of the comparative method emerges from repeated experiences in certain circumstances. This discernment evolves as the interlocutors reflect on practice and act on behalf of the other, through social connections and spaces for dialog between politics and knowledge. For the author, the sense of

community is strengthened when there is a willingness to communicate freely and democratically. In this context, comparative research essentially seeks understanding (NÓVOA, 2017), highlighting a comprehensive approach that values differences

In the investigative context, Zucchetti (2019) considers that the focus of Comparative Education is on understanding “how and why a situation is presented in a certain way and not in another, in different contexts”, considering the “other” (subject of the investigation) in relation to the cultural, social and historical dimensions. The author exemplifies the tensions between politics and knowledge in the school context by positioning Comparative Education as an investigative method that addresses social problems reflected in the school, but whose origin is the responsibility of society. As she points out, “knowing, learning and the appropriation of knowledge must be appropriated by the subjects of the investigation” (p. 351), as they are representatives of society and the main stakeholders in resolving the issues that affect them.

Lourenço Filho (2004), inspired by the ideas of the English specialist Lauwerys, uses an analogy to highlight the importance of local situations and the singularities of the people in a research context. He compares the results of comparative studies to the role of navigational knowledge for ship or aircraft captains, emphasizing that the conclusions drawn from the comparative method contribute to political autonomy and informed decision-making.

The navigator doesn't tell the captain of the ship or the pilot of the plane *where to go*. They tell them about the winds, the cliffs and shallows, or other obstacles that need to be avoided so that the ship can reach a predetermined point more safely and efficiently.

What it does, therefore, in the face of a predetermined purpose, is to clarify the situation in which the command activity should develop for the most secure result, once the

conditions of the task to be carried out have been grasped, after further examination of its *problems*. Comparative education studies offer valid elements for this analysis in the case of education systems, informing us of their reasons and the probabilities of achieving their operations. (LOURENÇO FILHO, 2004, p. 21)

In this sense, the analogy gives the method the use of specialized navigation instruments, essential for analyzing and crossing the different contexts of skies or seas with a clear understanding.

Likewise, Comparative Education, from its first manifestations in the 18th century to contemporary approaches, offers specific tools that, when used well, produce conclusions capable of guiding paths and boosting understanding, going beyond simple knowledge of different contexts.

The following sections examine the implications of globalization and evaluative policies on the local educational process, exploring how these factors influence practices and guide educational policies in different scenarios.

IMPACT OF

Nascimento, Carneiro and Leal (2024), based on Nóvoa (2010), highlight policy actions based on Comparative Education, including comprehensive topics and practical activities. According to the authors, the “world system” perspective offers an alternative view to traditional approaches to the method, positioning globalization as an essential factor for the analysis of educational processes, which enables users of the comparative method to consider various approaches and solutions to local educational problems, as well as increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of educational issues on an international scale.

According to Devecchi, Tauchen and Trevisan (2018), supported by Cowen (2012), “one of the efforts of Comparative Education has been to redefine interpretative concepts in or-

der to understand the new relationships between the national, the international and the global”. In this context, the authors raise the following problem:

[...] in a scenario of economic globalization and the internationalization of education, in which the transposition of educational models in a decontextualized manner is frequent, how can comparisons be made not merely out of the interests or speculations of institutions or countries, but out of a desire to learn about education from others? What's more, at a time when information structures and performance indicators have become the principle of intelligibility for social cohesion, is it possible to carry out work that interpolates and renews educational discourses through the possibility of discursive exchange between educational actors in different spaces and contexts? (DEVECCHI; TAUCHEN; TREVISAN, 2018, p. 3)

The first issue concerns the interconnection of global education systems, in the context of the globalization, globalization or internationalization of education. This often results in the transposition of educational models without proper local contextualization, benefiting certain institutions or countries exclusively. The second paradigm addresses student performance in in-school and out-of-school, national or international tests, where the use of data is seen as a means of producing legitimate knowledge, promoting the balance and functioning of contemporary societies.

Nóvoa (2017, p. 14) highlights “the need for difference and understanding, at a time when everything and everyone has become comparative, through globalization that has definitively changed the way we think”. In addition, Santos, Baades and Silva (2017) emphasize that each educational fact or event can be understood by observing the reciprocity between society and education, revealing a diversity of social and cultural reasons that explain the phenomenon.

Globalization has been defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations linking distant localities in such a way that local events are shaped by events taking place many miles away, and vice versa” (HELD, 1991). Held suggests, among other things, that globalization is the product of the emergence of the global economy, the expansion of transnational links between economic units that create new forms of collective decision-making, the development of inter-governmental and quasi-supranational institutions, the intensification of transnational communications and the creation of new regional and military organizations. The process of globalization is seen as something that makes national borders less distinct, alters internal solidarities and those between nation-states and profoundly affects the identities of national and interest groups (OLMOS; TORRES, 2012, p. 105).

With regard to the relationship between globalization and education, Kendall (2012), citing Crossley (2020), explains that globalization profoundly transforms educational systems, influencing their policies, practices and objectives, while intensifying the connections and interdependencies between different cultural and social contexts.

[...] interest in globalization, and in particular the role of education in the creation and distribution of information, opportunities, state and worker competitiveness, and individual characteristics such as flexibility, has led to a renaissance in education for international development. (KENDALL, 2012, p. 522)

In this context, Kazamias (2012) presents Andy Hargreaves’ reflections on the “reform of teaching (and education)” in the “knowledge society’ and the corresponding ‘knowledge-based economy’”. Hargreaves argues that these reforms often prioritize efficiency and measurable results, but lack a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between education, society and the economy, and neglect the need to address inequalities and promote social justice.

[...] contemporary capitalist societies that are also knowledge-based economies serve primarily the private good; their schools are run to develop primarily cognitive learning, skills and competencies instrumental to a knowledge society and a knowledge economy. However, according to him, a knowledge-based economy is a “force for creative destruction”. On the one hand, it “stimulates growth and prosperity”, but on the other, “its inexorable pursuit of profit and self-interest also strains and fragments the social order”. In knowledge-based economies, school systems “have become obsessed with the imposition and micromanagement of curricular uniformity”, rather than “promoting creativity and ingenuity” (KAZAMIAS, 2012, p. 201).

Paulston (2012), referring to Cowen’s (1996) ideas, points out that knowledge is constructed and reconstructed in different cultural, social and historical contexts, and that it is essential to consider these dynamics when analyzing educational systems. The author emphasizes that comparative education must go beyond the mere description of systems, seeking to interpret how local and global interactions shape knowledge and educational practices.

Knowledge has become a technology, that is, a marketable product subject to performativity and also to tests of truth. [...] Cowen argues, with great insight, that these changes define a different kind of comparative education, one that is not based on the tired modernist metanarratives of certainty, but on the recognition of a crisis of legitimacy. (PAULSTON, 2012, p. 408)

When considering globalization and worldwide evaluation policies, both phenomena coexist in the current context, allowing for the analysis of differences and understandings that emerge from the historical, social, economic, ethnic, cultural and ideological diversities of each society. This brings the researcher back to the interdisciplinary nature of Comparative Education (LOURENÇO FILHO, 2004; PEIXOTO; SILVA; SALOTTI, 2021).

In this regard, Santos, Baades and Silva (2017, p. 43) reinforce that interdisciplinarity is inherent to education, but in Comparative Education, it manifests itself in studies that investigate societies in all their dimensions even before understanding their educational systems.

RENEWAL OF EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

As we have seen, globalization affects the transfer of educational models and reinforces the need for local contextualization, bringing countries closer together and linking people to the use of supposedly reliable sources of information for checking student performance, for example.

In Comparative Education, however, “the databases and modes of investigation are more qualitative than quantitative”, reflecting its nature as an explanatory and interpretative human science (Kazamias, 2012), including aspects of the construction of subjectivities and the promotion of diverse and inclusive pedagogical practices.

An example of this can be seen in the global educational reforms that introduce political discourses and reconstitute the judgment capacity of each teacher.

Comparative Education makes it possible to identify and isolate general trends, effects and similarities of neoliberal policies in education, such as the “deprofessionalization of teachers” caused by the “market of competition and performance indicators”, reiterating the need for an analysis that is attentive to national, regional and local contexts (BALL *et al.*, 2013). The method transcended the limited investigation of exclusive aspects of educational systems (SANTOS; BAADES; SILVA, 2017) and evolved into an approach that seeks to understand the construction of subjectivities in relationships that produce discursive meanings and symbolic solidarities, esta-

blishing a new perspective that emphasizes the recognition of the other as a “text to be understood” and promotes interpretations committed to the plurality of meanings and their respective contexts (DEVECHI; TAUCHEN; TREVISAN, 2018).

This is because, since we can no longer understand educational processes through objective facts, but especially through language, discourse provides the opportunity to renew knowledge in the field through the objections of other interlocutors. (DEVECHI; TAUCHEN; TREVISAN, 2018, p. 11)

In this context, knowledge is acquired through the mediation of others, requiring a capacity for communicative interaction (VIGOTSKI, 2000). The “others” are interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds who, through dialog, help to overcome human limitations in attention and memory, expanding the ability to access information and make decisions.

We won't be able to problematize educational phenomena if we close ourselves off in traditional spaces of comparison. Within each country, there are many countries, many realities. Within each city, there are many cities. Within each neighborhood, within each place. If we don't recognize the different spatialities that exist in the same space, the different temporalities that exist in our time, we will hardly be able to move towards new ways of thinking. (NÓVOA, 2017, p. 25)

This interaction also makes it possible to overcome the dependency relationships that shape the subject's internal world and their individual perceptions.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

There are case studies or concrete examples, taken from the context of educational policies or global evaluations, which demonstrate the benefits and challenges of the comparative method.

This approach also reinforces the critical role of Comparative Education in promoting intercultural dialogues and improving understanding of the differences and similarities between educational systems.

From a practical point of view, Nascimento, Carneiro and Leal (2024) point out that

Comparative education makes it possible to evaluate educational performance indicators such as literacy rates, school completion rates, investment in education and results in national and international exams. This information is valuable for understanding the impact of educational policies and for identifying possible areas for improvement (NASCIMENTO; CARNEIRO; LEAL, 2024).

Nascimento, Carneiro and Leal (2024, p. 10) also point out that approaches such as “assessment and testing system” and “educational outcomes and indicators” are used in comparative studies to measure students’ academic progress and the quality of the education system, comparing factors such as dropout rates, performance on standardized tests and other relevant educational outcomes.

However, Kazamias (2012), citing Kandel (1933), points out that purely statistical treatments are useful for measuring results, prescribing conduct and imposing obligations in various educational activities, but warns that these methods are not suitable for defining educational objectives or establishing quality requirements for education systems

Comparative Education, as a special need, moves from a relatively distant past, analyzing places with similar or different social needs, to transfer, in the present, the knowledge generated from the differences and understandings identified, in a process that seeks to meet the specific demands of varied contexts (DEVECHI; TAUCHEN; TREVISAN, 2018; GOMES; PIMENTEL, 2020).

From this perspective, it is important to consider that the organization, structure and systematization give literary works on Comparative Education a character that is both enduring and current (SANTOS; BAADES; SILVA, 2017).

For example, a relevant work, which has remained current over time, is the record by George W. Parkyn, New Zealand director of educational research, entitled “*O ensino de segundo grau: estudo de educação comparada*” (*High school education: a comparative education study*) (MEC, 1966).

In the first few pages, Parkyn, in the section “*The evolution of secondary education: changes in structure and organization*”, presents reflections that reveal surprising similarities between secondary education in the 1960s and the current reality of secondary education in Brazil.

According to the MEC (1966), since the second half of the 20th century, educational problems around the world have varied significantly. In some countries, the difficulties stemmed from a lack of elementary schools, a high level of illiteracy and a long-term upward trend in the number of students in higher education. Even then, the primary and higher education levels were clearer about their needs and the acceptance of objectives and methods, which made it easier to define and guide their respective applications.

At secondary level, on the other hand, the situation is much more complicated: the very notion of secondary education is in full evolution, and the practical difficulties encountered in developing this education are aggravated by the confusion of objectives and differences of opinion. Of all the levels of education, it is undoubtedly the one that currently provides educators and administrators with the most interesting observations and the most fruitful comparative research. (MEC, 1966, p. 7)

Almost 60 years later, Parkyn's description confirms that secondary education continues to be a fertile field for research in Comparative Education, highlighting surprisingly current aspects. His analysis refers to a historical period that reveals problems similar to those faced today, such as the persistent "divergences and opinions" marked by imprecision in the definition of form and content. An example of this is the difficulties in objectively linking basic general education with training itineraries. In general, and in thesis, it is worth considering that the possible causes may be structural, perpetuating the existential gap still observed in secondary education

Thus, considering the importance of basic education as a fundamental stage of articulation between primary and higher education,

it is possible to see that the New High School prioritizes apparently individualized training paths, but that, in reality, it promotes the curricular emptying of essential subjects for critical thinking, such as Philosophy, History, Geography, Sociology and Arts. [...] The collapse of public schools is not a new phenomenon. It reflects centuries of inequality and structural violence that marginalize social groups - black and brown people, indigenous people, women, LGBT people and people living in poverty. The implementation of the New High School deepens this dystopian picture, consolidating public education as a space of precariousness and abandonment. Instead of being a mechanism for social transformation, the school is used as a tool for maintaining and naturalizing the structurally unequal and unjust social order. (MEDEIROS; FARIA, 2024)

In this way, globalization is highlighted as a central factor in the "disharmony" between the nation-state and formal education, highlighting that global transformations have a profound impact on educational systems and this process weakens the capacity of states to shape education according to their specific demands and contexts (OLMOS; TORRES, 2012).

The concept presented by Olmos and Torres (2012) describes a nation-state that uses its geopolitical status to expand foreign policies and consolidate internal political control, basing its practices on political interests and the cultural and ethnic preservation of the governed. In this scenario, the state seeks to foster a participatory spirit among its citizens through education aimed at preparing them for work, economic integration and political participation. This approach reflects an effort to reduce direct state intervention in education and redefine its role in building democracy, prioritizing individual autonomy and integration between the economic and political dimensions.

However, according to Olmos and Torres (2012), the solutions adopted are often based on theories that reflect the role of the state in society, but do not always serve the interests of society itself. Supported by the arguments of Martin Carnoy (1992), the authors consider that it is necessary to know what lies behind the discourse that promotes education and knowledge in society, given that

most analyses of educational problems imply a theory of the state, but rarely are the foundations of this theory recognized or made explicit in educational research and practice. Reflecting on our own assumptions seems to be a precondition for solid knowledge (OLMOS; TORRES, 2012).

Problems involving educational issues - such as those that occur in secondary education - must be solved with a focus on reason and the benefit of public school students.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The text examined contemporary issues, such as globalization and evaluation policies, which shape education on the national and international stage.

The analysis proposed a reflection on the implications of these phenomena, highlighting the impact of global dynamics on local educational practices and policies.

Comparative Education has been identified and understood as an essential tool for understanding the relationships between cultures, educational systems and values, promoting an inclusive and interpretive approach

The method's approach considers the contextualization of teaching models and the renewal of educational discourses, reflecting the central focus on the method's role in analyzing educational models in the global and local scenario, in an attempt to forward a possible resolution to the problem suggested by Devechi, Tauchen and Trevisan (2018, p. 3).

The aim was to discuss how comparative methods make it possible to contextualize teaching practices in different cultures and societies, taking into account historical, social, cultural, political and ideological influences, whether internal or external. In addition, the

text indicated the intention to renew educational discourses, promoting interpretations that are more inclusive and adapted to contemporary realities.

Finally, Comparative Education reveals itself as a catalyst for stimulating, transforming and reconciling educational experiences, by promoting dialog with the discourse of "the other" and proposing alternatives for exchanging daily practices "with the other". This approach places the second person as an active interlocutor and producer of meanings, capable of participating communicatively in different spaces, times and contexts.

In this way, the role of Comparative Education is reaffirmed as a field of study that values plurality, mutual understanding and the collective construction of knowledge (DEVECHI; TAUCHEN; TREVISAN, 2018).

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