

## **New World, New Global Education Review**

Bruce S. Cooper  
Fordham University

### **Introduction**

The world is getting smaller, more interconnected, and more in touch in the modern electronic, high-tech era-- and education is not very different. Thus, the start-up of the new journal, *Global Education Review*, is both critical and timely. Looking at problems, issues, and solutions in education becomes more interesting and useful when we compare what scholars and practitioners in different countries and cultures have found.

Confronting the same issues and problems across different countries can often be helpful as one nation learns from another. What follows are five examples of the comparative approach internationally often used in the study of education. Each example has its own merit and advantages; when taken together, they give a strong, comprehensive view of education by topic and nation.

### **1. Worldwide Comparisons of Topics: E.g., Teacher Unions**

In the 1990s, I edited and contributed to a book entitled, *Labor Relations in Education: An International Perspective* (1997), which compared and contrasted the unionization of teachers in 16 countries, the first book ever on this issue. I was able to get leading scholars and leaders in the labor movement to write about their countries.

Albert Shanker, leader of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), authored the chapter on the United States. Other countries included in this book were from North America - Canada and Mexico; in Europe nations included England, France, Germany and Hungary; other nations included were China, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

Subsequently, teachers from South and Central America invited me to visit Brazil, to explain how nations are similar and different, and where these countries were in comparison to other nations that had been in the collective bargaining mode longer.

Thus, a major advantage of the Global Perspective is that one nation and region can learn and understand its education issues, problems, programs and policies from regional neighbors and worldwide.

### **2. Comparing Ideologies of Education, Worldwide**

Interesting and important models, methods, and research designs from one country can be used and applied, when available and appropriate, in

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#### **Corresponding Author:**

Bruce S. Cooper, Fordham University, Graduate School of Education, 113 West 60 Street, New York, NY 10023  
Email: bcooper@fordham.edu

other countries. Certainly, each country has its own economic and social beliefs, ranging from Marxist and socialism, to capitalism and privatization. When scholars look, for example, at the funding of schools, the differences pop up quickly. Do families, regardless of income and status, have equal access to quality schools, and do their children excel or fail at the same rates?

Better understanding of worldwide notions of equity in education is also a good reason for global comparisons. Each country, using available resources (funding, facilities, books and materials, and high-tech equipment), works to give each child a quality education, based on what's available. Some nations see education as an individualistic, personal concern and matter, while others focus on the communal and national value of education.

Thus, nations may work "to reform" education from different viewpoints, using different models. Right now, we see a focus in the United States on bringing up the lowest achievers, so that all children can pass muster, graduate, and move on. Other countries tend to ignore the least able and the disabled (since they will rarely be the leaders in industry and government), and may instead strive to push the highest achievers to greater heights.

When nations compare children's attainment in math and science, for example, the United States has dropped, as Fallen (2012) found: "Achieving proficiency in mathematics appears to be a particular area of challenge for students in the United States. Results of the 2003 *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS), recently released, revealed that eighth graders in the United States ranked 15th among 46 participating countries" (Snell, 2012).

But what about the above average, and the gifted? Although international comparisons are often made among all children, both high and low achievers, these students are now commanding greater attention.

### 3. Philosophies of Education, Globally

A range of interesting philosophies of education can also be compared and used in numerous countries. For example, in the 1960s, the Summerhill School in England went international when A. S. Neill described the approach to education at Summerhill, and schools in other countries began to try the highly individual, personalized, approaches to education. Neill's beliefs were better understood across societies and countries, based on a "free school movement" and other philosophies of life and instruction in schools.

Thus, nation-by-nation, we find very different arguments about why universal education is good for society and the individual. The socialist-communist countries see education as creating a class-less society -- "Do it for the socialist state!" -- while capitalist, competitive, entrepreneurial nations often saw education as individual and personal -- "Do it for yourself!"

From a Third-World, developing-nation viewpoint, writers like Bassey Ubong from the Federal College of Education in Nigeria, explained that the philosophies of education often reflect the values of nations, ranging from entrepreneurial and private viewpoints to more national public philosophies. He notes that China and Russia, for example, were becoming more capitalistic.

As Ubong (2006) explained:

One approach to national development is to develop the citizens by way of making them self-reliant. Self-reliance implies independence that can be achieved through private effort in entrepreneurship, a situation in capitalist economies where private entrepreneurship has been allowed

to flower. Socialist economies such as China and Russia have subtly and slowly but surely been embracing private entrepreneurship, which, in China in particular, has had a salutary effect on economic growth. Developing countries should consider having definite national philosophies of education with self-reliance at the core. Some national philosophies of education and the impact on national development are discussed here. (p. 864).

Thus, a global approach to education analysis can point out basic economic-ideological differences, while also tracing changes, such as Russia becoming more entrepreneurial and The United States, more socialistic.

#### **4. Comparing Student-School Outcomes, Internationally**

Already we see student test scores and other school-based results being gathered, and international comparisons being made, such as the often quoted, *Trends in International Math and Science Study* (TIMSS), which has regularly provided comparative data on how well children in different nations are doing in two critical areas: math and science. As reported,

The scope and complexity of TIMSS is enormous. Forty-five countries collect data in more than 30 languages. Five grade levels were tested in the two subject areas, totaling more than a million students tested around the world. The success of TIMSS depended on collaborative effort between research centers in each country responsible for

managing the across-countries tasks such as training, selecting comparable samples of schools and students, and conducting the various steps required for data processing and analysis. (Beaton, et al., 1996, p. 54)

Another measure of school effectiveness is the Value Added Model, or VAM, that attempts to explain the causes of student improvements, by concentrating on the teacher, the school leadership and the program. As McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, and Hamilton (2003) explained in a Rand Corporation study done for the Carnegie Foundation, *Evaluating Value-Added Models for Teacher Accountability* (2003),

A teacher's effectiveness might also depend on the context of the school or school district. For example, a teacher in a school with supportive colleagues or a cooperative principal might be more effective than in an alternative setting. Similarly, policies of a school district or school principal might influence a teacher's effect. (p. 12)

Thus, the global perspective often leads to international comparisons of programs, subjects, and outcomes. As countries of the world compete and learn from each other, the international view becomes ever more important.

#### **5. Student Assessment and World Comparisons of Results**

Methods of assessment, too, vary by type, and have important international meaning and implications. We assess children's academic abilities, standings, growth and decline, and use

models such as “value added” (sometime called “gain scores”) that attempt to take students from where they are and determine their growth and improvement each year (see Sanders, Sanders, Saxton, & Horn, 1997).

Thus, we have worked for 40 years to measure and relate national and international improvements in education with economic growth and societal change and improvement. Theodore Schultz (1961) won a Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences by showing that investments in children’s education improved the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for nations. Investing in *human capital* made differences in fiscal growth and improvement.

Later, Levin, Belfield, Muennig and Rouse (2007) found that *not investing* in children’s education, as with black males, actually costs the society, for these under-educated men will be more likely to be on welfare, on Medicare or be incarcerated, each of which will cost society millions per year. They determined that, “Specifically, the value of just the public benefits embodied in additional tax revenues and reductions in the cost of public health and crime amounts to almost \$256,700 per new high school graduates” (Levin, et al., 2007, p. 706).

Thus, not only does investing in children’s education raise their yearly income and life-time earning, this funding also means that these students when they grow up are less likely to be on welfare, be in need of public medical services, or be in jail. Hence, we need to test the effects of good education, positively, nation-by-nation - examining variables such as income, health, and compliance with the law, as well as negatively when education is lacking, poor, or inappropriate/inadequate for the individual.

While the idea of treating human beings as “capital” was controversial, sounding to many like a form of slavery, the concept had important policy global educational-economic implications, whereby nations across the world were urged to improve human knowledge and

skill – particularly now in science and technology – to help raise the income and living standard of members of the society and to improve the quality of life for all.

## Conclusion

A global review, as in this journal, should give nations across the world some sense of how and what kinds of education make a difference later in employment, health, and yearly-income and, of course, in *yearly and lifetime earning streams*. For we know that education, health, and income are complexly related, as families with resources will and can live better, healthier lives, educate themselves and their children to better and higher levels, and get and keep better and higher paying jobs (see Cooper & Mulvey, 2012). As Benjamin Franklin said centuries ago, people could and should be “healthy, wealthy, and wise,” if the system was working for them.

This new journal explores education within and between countries, giving important information on nations’ education that have not often been assessed and analyzed -- and then compared. For as Marian Wright Edelman, Founder of The Children’s Defense Fund, explained, “Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”

And the *Global Education Review* is dedicated on a worldwide scale to doing just that – making our community, society, and world a better place in which to learn, work, and live in for all-- well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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#### About the Author

**Bruce S. Cooper, Ph.D.**, is Professor of Education Leadership and Policy at the Fordham University Graduate School of Education, NYC, and a former president of the Politics of Education Association.