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Comparative education or epistemological power games for world domination

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the worlds which comparative education has explored and is exploring are characterised by three main political patterns. The first and oldest is the competitive nation-state as the starting point of the comparison, an educationalised nation-state, one whose relative global strength in economy and military prowess is attributed to the education system. The second pattern, easily visible in the Cold War, is the idea of an almost standardised progression, linked to economic, military and thus geopolitical power. And the contemporary pattern is that this nexus of global potency and education can be broken down into comparative school performance tests (for example in PISA currently) through which reform needs (almost automatically) are formulated at home, and elsewhere. If this analysis and its history – which is illustrated in the following – is even approximately accurate, 'comparative education' may need to re-think some of its basic assumptions about itself.

KEYWORDS

Comparative education; epistemology; globalisation; world power; imperialism

Introduction

In 1917, the Chinese scholar Ji Yu published in Chinese the book *Comparative Study of National Education in Germany, France, Britain and the USA* (Yu 1917). In the book's preface, Yu states that his publication is based on documentary research he conducted from various sources and, in particular, from another book with a similar title by Japanese author Hanjiro Nakajima published the year before (1916). Nakajima, for his part, had studied at the Normal School in Tokyo between 1906 and 1909 and had taught pedagogy at the Normal School in Tianjin, a Chinese city which at the time was administered by the colonial Eight-Nation Alliance representing Russia, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Japan, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and the German Empire. In 1909, Nakajima went to Europe for three years, first to Germany and then to England, and after returning to Japan in 1913, he taught at (what is now) Waseda University until 1926. During this time, he published articles and books on education in the West, including his book on the educational systems in Germany, France, England, and the United States (Nakajima 1916) which was to serve as an important basis for Ji Yu's 1917 book in Chinese.

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While reading Nakajima's book, Yu felt 'that I have travelled by myself through those countries observing their education' (Yu 1917, 1, preface). Based on the assumption that education is in fact the 'mother of civilisation', Yu aimed at a similar book in Chinese to inform more Chinese about education in these 'most civilised countries' (1). According to Yu, few Chinese educators had the opportunity to visit or study in these countries. Therefore, the book was intended to serve as an open window for Chinese who wanted to know more about how national education, as an engine of civilisation, was conducted in Germany, France, Britain, and the USA.

In China, the perception of an 'advanced' West vis-à-vis its own lower state of development had been on the rise since at least the Opium War in the 1840s (Mao 2016). When China lost its dominance over Korea to Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, its self-perception as lagging behind became even more entrenched (Osterhammel 2014, 793–795). As a result, the Qing Dynasty authorities began sending young people abroad to strengthen and reform their own country (Jiang and Xu 2007), foremost to Japan, which in its turn had opened up from centuries of isolation after 1870. Japan had been sending high-ranking politicians to North America and Europe who had brought home political and technological know-how and, not least, intellectual (Howland 2002; Craig 2009) and educational ideals (Ito 2007). On this basis, Japan had established a German-inspired constitutional empire and undertaken immense technological change and educational reforms (Yamada 1998). From 1896 to 1937, over 11,000 Chinese students went to Japan to study the West (Zhang 1996; Yokoi and Gao 2012). Hence, these overseas Chinese students in Japan, including Ji Yu, learned a lot not only about Japan but also about the 'civilised' western countries – through Japanese eyes.

This historical narrative offers scope for a wide range of research, such as how particular thought styles travel: in this case, the epistemology of comparative education. Quite obviously, Yu's and Nakajima's publications on comparative education focusing on countries deemed 'advanced in civilisation' is not only an interesting example of a transfer of knowledge and how this knowledge morphs as it moves (Cowen 2009), but also captures a particular stance on the *raison d'être* of comparative research in education.

That stance has proven remarkably stable over the last century. It captures a presupposed link between the education system, nation-building, and advancement (today: 'development'); the idea that one can learn from comparison for the benefit of one's own national development and, potentially – in a remarkable inversion of the relational structure – having to teach others (whether they really want to or not) in order to align them with one's own educationalised national doctrine of development and progress (Tröhler 2022a).

It is precisely the processes related to the latter motifs – instructing others about school reform and governance for development on a global scale – that have led to trends worldwide that are interpreted as isomorphism. These 'isomorphisms' were then popularised, especially after 1989, under the catchword of 'globalisation'. This, again, led researchers to overlook the nation-state as the origin of both the imperial motif of instructing others, leading to what seem to be isomorphism, and the rise of comparative education as an academic sub-discipline as such (Cowen 2022; Tröhler 2022b). Critical examination of the imperial and colonial agenda of policy and comparative research (Takayama 2018) has led on to a concern that 'the production and reproduction of hegemonic forms of

knowledge are precisely the institutionalizations of a linguistic or cultural epistemicide' (Paraskeva 2016, 241), which has recently been argued particularly for the Qing dynasty period in the 1860s in China (Zhao 2022).

In recent years, however, it has also become apparent that perceptions of 'actual' global isomorphism are also expressions of Western narcissism, ignorance, or accusatory self-criticism. The Special Issue of *Comparative Education* focusing on the 'comparative educationist as a foreigner' (Kim 2020, 1) is revealing, not least because it gives voice to comparative scholars working 'outside of their countries of origin'. One of the invitees, Keita Takayama, describes his study abroad visits in Canada and the U.S., and how these experiences alienated him epistemologically from his Japanese colleagues in comparative education, who, as a rule, had never studied abroad (Takayama 2020). To Takayama, the epistemological tension became particularly evident since he, trained in Anglo-American comparative education, had chosen Japan as the case for his dissertation. He describes the result years later, with the insights of the Japanese sociologist Sugimoto (2014, 192), thus: 'My dissertation treated Japanese education "a productive space for testing – and potentially enriching and modifying – general sociological theories of Western origin"' (Takayama 2020, 2).

Takayama's autobiographical reflection exemplifies the general idea that underlies this article, namely that there is a dominant model of comparative research that is reflected upon only in exceptional cases. This prevailing model represents a worldview of nation-states in international competition for global dominance that can be described as thoroughly educationalised. This term is to be understood as a cultural reflex to reformulate all kinds of social problems and challenges as educational issues (Tröhler 2017). In this context, one's position in the global competition for dominance is determined quite profanely by economics and military clout, which in turn sets the standard for 'progress' or 'development' for others.

This article argues that the worlds which comparative education has explored and is exploring are characterised by three main political patterns. The oldest is the competitive nation-state as the starting point of the comparison, an educationalised nation-state, one whose relative global strength in economy and military prowess is attributed to the education system. The second pattern, easily visible in the Cold War, is the idea of an almost standardised progression, linked to economic, military and thus geopolitical power. And the contemporary pattern is that this nexus of global potency and education can be broken down into comparative school performance tests (for example in PISA currently) through which reform needs (almost automatically) are formulated at home, and elsewhere. If this analysis and its history – which is illustrated in the following – is even approximately accurate, 'comparative education' may need to re-think some of its basic assumptions about itself.

To make this thesis plausible, I first examine the preconditions for the motives that were to lead to comparative education, the nation-state. I then turn to the educationalised ways in which the performance of the nation-state was interpreted, especially in crisis-ridden world power England. Thirdly, I discuss how, on this basis, the academic model of comparative research emerged in its basic features at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the next step, I show how it was first normatively reduced in the second half of the twentieth century to two of the Western war winners. Finally, I try to make understandable that these developments after the end of the Cold War led to

the talk about 'globalisation' that has served to obscure the imperial impulses of globally dominant nation-states.

The peak of civilisational progress, economic-military potency, and the nation-state

At the time when Nakajima (1916) and Yu (1917) celebrated the civilisational progress of Germany, France, England, and the United States, attributing their admired development to their educational systems and wanting to learn from them for their own progress, these idealised countries were at war, fighting each other to the death. Soldiers stood in the trenches for months and years, and tens of thousands were killed by newly developed hand grenades or combat gases, such as the mustard gas that German troops first used on the night of 12–13 July 1917 to improve their starting position for the expected British attack at Ypres, Belgium (Faith 2016; Watanabe 2016; Johnson 2016).

Yet, science had made its mark not only in the development of effective lethal weapons. Intellectuals were quick to intervene in the propaganda war, as the example of two winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Frenchman Henri Bergson and the German Rudolf Eucken, shows. In defending the case for their own country, they needed – like their admirers in the Far East – the 'argument' of 'civilisation', which semantically lay at the intersection of two discourses, namely that of progressiveness (to the point of perfection or *perfectibilité*) and that of nationalism. Bergson, who had maintained good relations with Germany before the outbreak of the war, said on 8 August 1914, just four days after the German troops had invaded Belgium: 'The struggle against Germany is the very struggle of civilisation against barbarism', to which Germany had 'relapsed' (Bergson [1914] 1972, 1102) after having for a long time been engaged with 'poetry, art, and metaphysics' (Bergson 1915, 8). Germany, Bergson argued, almost necessarily had to become 'industrial and commercial' after the founding of the German Empire in 1871 and to expand its 'military power' massively, which in turn shaped its economy (12), an unmistakable sign for Bergson of a turning away from poetry, art, and philosophy and of a reversion to barbarism.

The Germans also discussed their exposure to world history, but through a completely different philosophy of history. Rudolf Eucken understood 'the world as being in the process of becoming and full of hard struggles', and thus the Germans felt called 'to participate in the great work of further development … . We want to intervene, to promote, and thus we give history a great significance' (Eucken 1914, 20). The benchmark of historical dignity was, however, not the achievements of the French, the British, or the US-Americans, but the (ancient) Greeks. Yet, whereas the Greeks had been aesthetic idealists, the Germans were now embodying the principles of 'ethical idealism', whose foundations were 'greatness, truth, and originality' (20) and which promised the best 'for the future of mankind' (19). Responding to the foreign critics of Germany's 'regression', Eucken admitted that the Germans had indeed expanded the economy and the military and had shown that they actually were a 'people capable of arms, a warlike people', so that, by his time, they had taken the global lead 'on land and on water', and 'in industry, in technology' (8). However, Eucken emphasised, this development had not changed 'our true, innermost being', and was not to be seen as a return to barbarianism but quite contrarily as an expression of the unique connection between the 'temporal and the eternal

that is reserved for the Germans, for the benefit of mankind, because it is in danger of falling into senselessness. Exactly for this reason the Germans have world-historical significance' (22).

Intellectuals on both sides of the front lines were quite clear that the issue they were debating was world-historical progress; the dispute – and thus ultimately the legitimisation of killing – was over the interpretation of the nature of human progress, which was seen as embodied and represented in the respective nation-states (even if Germany was led by an emperor). Yet, regardless of how this was fought on paper, it was the armies of the 'world powers' striving for domination that decided the war, and these were the traditional 'great powers' that had prevailed against the newcomer of the late nineteenth century, Germany, namely Great Britain, France, the US, and also Italy (Russia had left the coalition against the Central Powers after its revolution of 1917). What followed was a political re-organisation of Europe, in particular the transformation of the old empires. While Russia had given itself new structures through the internal revolution of 1917 and Finland (finally) became a nation-state in 1918 as part of these Russian upheavals, the victorious powers paved the way in the various peace treaties for the transformation of the old great empires, the German, the Habsburg, the Ottoman, into nation-states.

The progressiveness of global civilisation, as these events had shown only shortly after Nakajima's (1916) and Yu's (1917) admiration, was embodied in the European nation-state, whose foreign policy strength was defined by economic prowess, science, technology, and military power, and whose domestic strength lay in having loyal citizens who felt united as a nation, regardless of any existing social differences. In addition to numerous overt strategies to reinforce national cohesion, such as national holidays, national anthems, public national symbols and emblems, national teams in sports, a key element of the state was to make citizens understand these everyday national performances as their own by conceptualising the school as the place where national literacies were learned (Tröhler 2020a). Citizens, who are constantly exposed to the myriad minor and major representations of their own nation, should always know or even sense that they are essentially part of these same identity-creating representations (Billig 1995). Not least through the school and its curriculum, the national should become part of the identity of citizens; it should become their culturally taken for granted 'second nature' (Tröhler 2020b, 18–19). This was what had fascinated Nakajima and Yu during World War I while writing their comparative education.

The educationalised imperialist nation-state, fear of weakness, and curiosity about neighbours' education systems

The political re-organisation of Europe after World War I did not simply impose the political principle of the nation-state, but a (desired) expansion of the spheres of validity of these territories, which was expressed in the nineteenth century shift in semantics from 'great power' to 'world power' (Faber 1982, 930–933). The characteristic of the 'world power' was, as Bismarck put it in his talk 'We Germans fear God, but nothing else in the world', 'to press and influence its sphere of interest on the policies of other countries and to seek to direct those things' (Bismarck [1888] 1930, 336). A 'world power' country was now a globally strong competitive nation-state, expansive-imperial

by its very nature, colonialising, and representing (at least in its own perception) the pinnacle of civilisation, exemplary for others. It drew its foreign policy strength from science and technology serving industry, trade, and the army, and its domestic stability from a particular social policy, an efficient administration based on statistics, and it organised an educational policy around the formation of national identity (Tröhler 2023).

The close connection between indications of civilisational progress, economic-military strength, and education that had led Asian explorers to make real (Nakajima) or imagined (Yu) journeys to Europe for the benefit of their own country became especially apparent in the United Kingdom that had fallen into crisis some thirty years after its 'Golden Years' between 1850 and 1870 (Porter 1994, 26–37). As a result, a more academic, policy-supporting model of comparative education emerged. In this last third of the nineteenth century and in the face of domestic crises and the increasingly apparent dissolution of the Empire – London was then, as the capital of the ultimate world empire, 'the center of the world capital market' (Osterhammel 2014, 671) –, an English programme of nation-building emerged, the cornerstone of which, not coincidentally, were the different school acts between 1870 and 1902. It was for precisely this purpose of English nation-building that international comparisons were made and an academic discursive field configured itself, from which comparative education emerged as a university subject.

The comparisons made by the worried British were with countries that were considered to have highly developed educational systems, such as the Protestant Netherlands and Switzerland, and in the few countries that seemed to them to be the most dangerous in terms of world and economic policy, i.e. France, Germany, and later also the United States. An early comparative example is from the school inspector Matthew Arnold who in 1861 described the elementary educational system in France with comparative remarks on Switzerland and the Netherlands (Arnold 1861); a comparison between the higher education systems in France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland followed later (Arnold 1868). Likewise, in the parliamentary debates it was argued that Massachusetts was spending more on schooling than the entire British Empire, and this discrepancy was an essential problem since education was said to be 'as national a need as the army or the navy' (Armytage 1970, 126–127). In 1870, the English civil servant in the British War Office and founder and first editor of the journal *Nature*, Joseph Norman Lockeyer, took the 1870 outbreak of war between Germany and France – 'the two most highly civilised countries of Europe' (Lockeyer [1870] 1906, 1) – as an opportunity to remind Britain to '*prepare for peace* as well as for war' and to do so 'by means of a greater educational effort, more science schools, a truer idea of the mode in which a nation can really progress, fit ourselves to take our place among the nations when peace returns' (4). In the aftermath of the first Education Act passed in 1870, John Morley published *The Struggle for National Education* (1873), and in a later publication, he reported the central arguments that would have been in favour of this law, these being clearly military: 'The triumphant North in America [during the American civil war 1861–1865, DT] was the land of the common school. The victory of the Prussians over Austrians at Sadowa in 1866 was called the victory of the elementary school teacher' (Morley 1903, 302). The interest in school and school reform lay primarily in military strength, with which colonial dominance was also to become possible on a global scale.

By the time Morley (1903) spread the continental European *bon mot* on English soil that schooling was ultimately the basis for military clout and thus for self-assertion in international competition, England had already passed the Balfour-Morant Act (1902) that finally made English schooling a matter for the nation-state, following the continental model. In research, it was long assumed that by this law the nation-state had prevailed here at the expense of church and religion. Newer voices claim, however, that with this law the Anglican Church (and not religion) forced the nonconformists out of school (Parker, Allen, and Freathy 2020), and thus contributed significantly to the definition of what, nationally speaking, is to be considered 'English' via the school and its curriculum. What was governmental were school reforms and politics, and what was targeted were national identity, loyalty, and labour. English as a national idea was Anglican and not nonconformist. The education laws between 1870 and 1902 did what they did elsewhere, namely to direct the state school toward 'doing nation', to make the nation the 'second nature' of its citizens (Tröhler 2020b), that is to strengthen the cultural thesis of 'what one is', or should be: loyal-national.

Nation-building through education reform followed a comparative strategy that was supposed to save the British world empire. To learn how to improve the foundations of the somewhat unbalanced Empire, the disconcerted English looked to France, Germany, and the United States, to the 'principal countries' of the world, as the Welsh school inspector Robert Edward Hughes put it (Hughes [1902] 1906, 4). With the exception of the Imperial German Empire, they were imperialistic colonial nation-state powers that could not fight themselves, so they preferred to learn from each other. France, England, and the United States, as well as Imperial Germany, were the rivals for world domination, and they greedily and curiously wanted to learn from each other. Wavering Great Britain led the way and developed an academic systematic, comparative education for this purpose, an epistemological template that people like Nakajima and Yu subscribed to when they published their books in the midst of World War I in 1916 and 1917, respectively.

The epistemological configuration of comparative education around 1900

In order to survive for over a century, this epistemology of comparative education first had to be formulated more precisely, secured institutionally, and canonised through associations and publication organs (book series, journals). Perhaps the most impressive template comes from (the forgotten) Robert Edward Hughes in his book *The Making of Citizens: A Study in Comparative Education* published in 1902, which focussed on the 'principal countries' of the world:

> The purpose of this book is to observe the result of the movement [for national training] as it has taken place in the four principal countries of the world, England, France, Germany, and the United States. It is our aim here to paint … , four pictures showing how these four countries, like good mothers, endeavour to prepare their future citizens for life. (Hughes [1902] 1906, 3)

Hughes' concern in writing his study on comparative education was clearly national, as becomes evident from the first few pages, when he complains that the English, in their deep scepticism about state regulation, had simply sleep-walked the introduction of a

state school system, the 1870 Act being a compromise that did (too) little in comparison to the neighbours. 'This fact – the fact that England more or less deliberately handicapped herself in the battle of the nations by delaying the provision of intellectual weapons for her citizens – must never be forgotten when comparing the English school of to-day with its rivals' (28). Hughes talks about it as a 'suicidal policy in the matter of organising modern secondary training for her citizens' (28). He was concerned with establishing, in the service of a modern democracy, a comprehensive education system that was not socially segregated and in which secondary education was seamlessly linked to the elementary level (4–8; see Hughes 1903). Learning from others by comparison did not mean simply adopting everything that was admirable:

> The discipline of the German school is admirable, so is the general system of training – *for German children*; yet there can be no doubt that such a system would be the very worst for English or American children. It would kill those very characteristics which make the Anglo-Saxon what he is to-day, a wanderer on the face of the earth, practical, resourceful, and self-reliant. (Hughes [1902] 1906, 11)

The educational system that had to be built for the strong nation-state was to be adapted to what was called the 'national character'. Accordingly, in order '[t]o Germanise the English school, it would be necessary to Teutonise the Saxon' (Hughes [1902] 1906, 63), an impossibility. At the same time that academic comparative education was being configured, Michal Sadler, far better known than Hughes, made essentially the same arguments with regard to 'national character' in his *How Far Can We Learn Anything of Practical Value From the Study of Foreign Systems of Education* (Sadler 1900). In doing so, he used a metaphor with which he naturalised the cultural construct of the nation:

> We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant. (Sadler 1900, 11)

Indeed, that would contradict the organic character of an educational system:

> A national system of Education is a living thing, the outcome of forgotten struggles and difficulties, and "of battles long ago". It has in it some of the secret workings of national life. It reflects, while it seeks to remedy, the failings of the national character. (11)

One reason Hughes played no role in the discussion of comparative education in England may be that he was a Welsh school inspector, and Wales was, in the eyes of Londoners, not exactly the pinnacle of civilisation and, accordingly, could do little – domestically – to stabilise the global grandeur of the emerging British nation-state in the faltering empire. Another reason why Sadler has become the 'star' of the development of comparative education around 1900 is that he 'developed comparative investigation within a programme of policy-related but independent studies under official aegis' (Phillips 2020, 3), serving the Ministry of Education as the Director of the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports (Phillips 2020, 25–26). Under his responsibility, his office published the eleven-volume series *Special Reports on Educational Subjects* (1898–1902). Although there were occasionally shorter reports on particular educational situations, the reports were dominated on the one hand by the situation in Great Britain and Ireland and then in the British colonies (both 1901) and on the other by the situations in the Protestant countries in Scandinavia,

the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, and Hungary. Entire volumes were given to France, Germany, and the USA, all published in 1902. France was interesting because of its organisation of rural schools, Germany because of secondary and vocational education, while in the US, the deep national roots of the education system attracted attention.

If Michael Sadler indeed set 'the cornerstones of the theoretical orientation of twentieth century comparative education' (Kazamias and Massalias 1965, 3) and 'still inspires' and 'even today provides us with a degree of wisdom that often forms the starting point for a fresh discussion' (Phillips 2020, 32), then Sadler wrote actually the script of the epistemology of comparative education. It is nationally-imperially motivated with considerable interest in other strong imperial nation-states whose strength was attributed to their educational systems, and these were, as a rule, England, France, the US, and Imperial Germany.

Thus, it is being argued, it was during these years that the DNA of comparative educational research was developed and that it not only solidified but also became hidden over the course of the twentieth century. Although other countries have repeatedly been able to 'enjoy' being included in comparisons, mostly Protestant ones, the Big 4 have (almost) always been among them and set the standard not least because of the origin of the authors, who have usually come from one of these four states.

In this way, the epistemology of comparative education was largely configured, and according to Elaine Unterhalter and Laila Kadiwal it has not lost is imperial-colonial stance until now (Unterhalter and Kadiwal 2022). It survived the twentieth century with two modifications. These concern, firstly, the reduction of the 'leading' nation states from four to two (or even one) and, secondly, the transition from the model of learning from others to the model of teaching others, which was to form the basis of what was called 'globalisation' after the end of the Cold War.

Development or bringing the others on track: comparative education during the Cold War

During the Cold War, modifications occurred both in terms of who determined what comparative education was or should be and in terms of the *raison d'être* of comparative education that accompanied its increasing institutionalisation in universities. The first academic comparativists around 1900 had been British scholars concerned about their empire and the English nation and eager to learn from others. However, London gained increasing competition from across the Atlantic, especially from Teachers College during the first half of the twentieth century.

Isaac Leon Kandel can be considered symptomatic in this respect. Educated in England, he had enrolled at Teachers College, where he, after graduating in 1910, had a brilliant career at Teachers College International Institute. He not only wrote the above-mentioned book *Studies in Comparative Education* (1933), but he served for years as the editor of two journals and of the *Educational Yearbook of the International Institute of Teachers College,* thereby contributing significantly to the discursive configuration of university-based comparative education in the United States.

After World War II, the imperial appetite of the US awoke and they began to colonise the world in a number of ways with characteristics that differed markedly from the traditional colonies of the European nation-states, whose colonial rule largely ended by

the 1960s (Ambrose and Brinkley 2011): The success of this U.S. colonisation was that they pursued the strategy of relative invisibility by following the credo of *How to Hide an Empire* (Immerwahr 2019). In this context, comparative education was placed on a somewhat altered epistemological base and institutionalised and consolidated on a broader scale.

One expression of this development is the founding of the first Comparative Education Society, the CES, in 1956 in New York, publishing the journal *Comparative Education Review* (CER) since the Sputnik-year 1957. Latent tension and competition with the British were expressed in the foundation of the Comparative Education Society in Europe CESE in 1961 in London. The British response in 1964 to the US-American journal CER was *Comparative Education* (CE), followed a few years later by the journal *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* by the British Section of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). Then, in 1979, this British Section of the CESE mutated to the British Comparative Education Society (BCES), adding 'international' to its name in 1983 (BCIES).

The British addition of 'international' to 'comparative' in 1983 was not harmless, but it was also not original; the U.S. society had already done the same in 1968 when the CES was renamed as CIES (Wilson 1994; Berends and Trakas 2016; Epstein 2016). In the context of the educationalised Cold War after Sputnik and the International Education Act in 1966 – according to which the U.S. 'view of our foreign relations and the role that education is to play in them' (Read 1966, 407) was codified –, this renaming expressed the U.S.' global appetite and claim to education. This Anglo-Saxon, but foremost U.S-American claim had already been made clear three years earlier when the *Yearbook of Education*, published since 1932, was renamed the *World Yearbook of Education* (Cowen 2022). What was to be considered 'comparative' and what 'international', a combination of theoretically inspired research and activist reform policy for 'others', was thus defined in two Anglo-Saxon countries, the Western war winners and leaders of one bloc of the Cold War. They both represented a political ideology characterised by a weak state, a strong economy, and only rudimentary social policies, and they never hesitated to use the military to protect their economy and national pride, which was measured in no small part by gross domestic product.

The normative epistemology of comparative education, which was closely linked to the economic, political, and military size of four nation-states, underwent a reduction to the two differently imperial Anglo-Saxon nation-states during this period. The loser of the War, Germany, and the formerly partly-occupied France, were marginalised. The cool calculus of national greatness as measured by military power and measurable economic potency had consequences for the methodological orientation of comparative education. Harold J. Noah (TC) and Max A. Eckstein (CUNY) analysed an evolution of comparative education into a science, methodologically aligned with the empirical social sciences. They identified five stages in the methodological development of comparative education, starting with the 'most primitive comparative education', with its 'tales brought home by travellers to foreign parts' (Noah and Eckstein 1969, 4), to a social science orientation, which became clearly empirical after World War II. The undiscussed starting point was still the comparison between nation-states, the research for which was based on both 'vastly increased bodies of data and improved techniques in social science research' (7). Noah and Eckstein expressed their conviction that 'there can be little doubt that potential

contributions of data and quantitative methods to the field are such that they will have to be reckoned with' (7).

These developments, first the reduction of the model states that set the norm for comparison, i.e. the UK and in particular the U.S., then the methodological orientation towards large scale data as well as the appetite for comparison, were accompanied by a global-historical order that now was subsumed under the concept of 'development'. This was partly expressed in 1961 in the transformation of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which had been limited to Europe's economic reconstruction, to the intercontinental OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), which included first Canada and the United States then Japan, Australia, and New Zealand shortly after, i.e. with the exception of Japan, further Anglo-Saxon countries.

This inclusion of countries outside of Europe led to the abandonment of the traditional division of the earth into continents and cultures to one single denominator, development, and the stages of 'development' into four categories. First came the developed countries, i.e. primarily the United States and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe; then the developing countries, i.e. Southern and South-eastern Europe and, to a lesser extent, South America and parts of Asia; third, the undeveloped countries, such as most African countries, which were in the process of freeing themselves from colonial rule; and then, the wrongly developed countries, such as those of the Eastern Bloc. 'Development' was obviously not an innocent term but the keyword of a certain ideology that classified itself as ideology-free (Tröhler 2014), an argument that had been effectively pursued by Daniel Bell in his 1960 book *The End of Ideology* (Bell 1960).

This world-political and world-historical canonisation of 'development' went hand in hand with the imperial appetite that has in principle characterised all nation-states and paved the way for taking control, via Western-dominated international and global institutions, of the areas of the world that had been liberated from their traditional colonial masters by the 1960s. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL; see Elfert 2018), founded in 1952 and publishing its own journal *The International Review of Education* (IRE) under the catchword 'international' since 1955; the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), founded in 1963; and the Education For All (EFA) initiative serve(d) this purpose. All these initiatives created the space for 'exchange' that was in fact largely a place of instruction and coercion, namely, what policies to pursue in the less developed countries in order to move up the scale of development defined by the West (Chabbott 2003). This gradual implementation of the development-scheme was taken so seriously by many American sociologists of education that they spoke of the emergence of a coming 'world society' and a 'world curriculum', interpreted as an expression of 'globalisation' rather than as the result of imperial appetites of extremely powerful nation-states (Tröhler 2022b).

'Globalisation' as a cloak for national imperialism after 1989

The perception of developments around and after 1989 as an expression of 'globalisation' was itself a product of mindsets cultivated in strong nation-states, which had had imperial ambitions since the Cold War. 'Globalisation' was an authoritarian construction of the globe culminating from developments since the late 1950s, when the ideology of

'development', shaped and scaled by extremely strong nation-states themselves, began to dictate development aid and assistance education or assistance to other nation-states.

Compared to the situation around 1916 and 1917, when Nakajima and Yu made their comparative studies of Europe and the US for the purpose of developing their own countries, what had changed now was the restriction of the model to one or two Anglo-Saxon countries, to the quantifying method, and above all the fact that those who were once admired now became instructors, and those who were once researchers and admirers became the taught (Tröhler 2022a); the originally plural and culturally sensitive characteristic of comparative education (Epstein 2006) – one respected otherness, even if one wanted to learn from it – disappeared behind a uniform developmental grid of thinking, an epistemology that dominates above all the period after the end of the Cold War under the catchword 'globalisation'. It was no longer the case that some wanted to learn from others and translate this into their own national logic, but that others now taught some to become, via the paradigm of development, more like oneself (or at least as one felt oneself to be): at the forefront of development and thus as the motor of what came to be called 'globalisation'.

The roadmap to this globalisation can be seen in the cornerstones of comparative education since the beginning of the Cold War, for instance in Nicholas Hans' *Comparative Education*, in which Germany was unceremoniously replaced by the Soviet Union, ennobled as a 'democratic country': the US, England, France, and the USSR were now included in the comparison (Hans [1949] 1950). John Francis Cramer and George Stephenson Browne reintroduced West Germany during the *Wirtschaftswunder* in their *Comparative Study of National Systems* (1956) and added the former British colonies of Canada and Australia. As soon as the end of the Soviet Union became visible, it disappeared again from the comparative scene, as evident in Müller, Ringer, and Simon's *The Rise of the Modern Educational Systems* (1987), and shortly after the end of the Cold War, the 'old order' was restored in Andy Green's *Education and State Formation* (1990), focusing again on England, France, Germany, and the US.

The focus on these four nation-states has remained largely intact, especially in studies proceeding historically, with an increased focus on the Anglo-Saxon nation-states described above and a certain devaluation of continental European nation-states and with the slow consideration of 'other parts of the world' as well. This orientation is impressively reflected in the prestigious *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education* series currently publishing volumes devoted to biographies of comparatists in three parts of the world: *North American Scholars of Comparative Education* (Epstein 2019), focussing on the US and Canada; *British Scholars of Comparative Education* (Phillips 2020); and a *Continental European Scholars of Comparative Education* (Schriewer, forthcoming). This 'initial set of three' (Kim 2020, 1) is meanwhile being expanded to include volumes on Latin America; South Asia; and the Pacific Rim. Further volumes on Africa and the Middle East are envisaged (personal communication from the Series Editor).

This epistemological Western-biased nation-state orientation in comparative education also shapes the relevant journals. For the CIES-journal *Comparative Education Review*, Charl C. Wolhuter found that, in the half a century from its first publication in 1957 until 2006, almost 80% of all the 1157 articles dealt with nation-states as their units of analysis (Wolhuter 2008, 325) and the vast majority focussed on one single nation-state (326). While the USSR was the most frequently covered country in the

years following Sputnik from 1957 to 1972, interest dropped dramatically in the following years (327–328). The U.K., which had been second in research interest behind the USSR in the first fifteen years, began to slowly fall away in favour of the United States during the last peak of the Cold War, and China began to attract more and more attention in the 1990s in parallel with its steady economic and military rise as a global player (327–328).

In addition, 61% of all authors who published in the *Comparative Education Review* in these 50 years between 1957 and 2006 were from the United States; authors from other countries – much less than this proportion – were mostly from the UK, Canada, and Australia; German or French authors played only a very minor role (Wolhuter 2008, 332). The Anglo-Saxon-dominated background of the authors, who have often written about their own country, is impressive. This has not been much different in the *International Review of Education* (IRE) journal published by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (Schwippert 2002, 121). Comparable research on authors in the journal *Comparative Education* is lacking, but the focus on nation-states as a unit of study is also evident in this journal, with an emphasis on European nation-states and countries that had once belonged to the British Empire (Foster, Addy, and Samoff 2012, 731). The perception of globalisation is thus less a factual reality than the result of imperial ways of thinking that characterise those who feel powerful in the world and no longer want to be confined to their own nation state (Tröhler 2022b).

Conclusion

Part of the argument has been that these epistemological cornerstones, as they have developed and been consolidated institutionally over the entire twentieth century, have led to what has been and is being negotiated under the keyword 'globalisation'. In an interesting yet misleading way, 'globalisation' is often discussed as a phenomenon that has effects or impacts on nation-states. Strikingly little attention is paid to the fact that the globalisation theories, that have become popular since the beginning of the end of the Cold War, have been written primarily by sociologists from the Anglo-Saxon world who are largely unaware of their own national path dependency (Tröhler 2022b). But the academic negation of the principle of the nation-state, in particular of the strongest possible nation-state, does not nullify its effectiveness; on the contrary, the less it is brought up for discussion, the less language is given to it, the more it can develop its effectiveness. 'Globalisation', 'world society', or 'world curriculum' are not sharp analytical concepts. In contrast they rather successfully conceal the fact that modern imperial claims to power originate in (very strong) nation-states, which always see themselves as unique but at the same time as a model for other nation-states – as a development goal for these others via educational reform, whose success promises to be easily measured in comparative statistics.

The basic epistemological assumptions of this kind of comparative education – which is expressed symptomatically in Carnoy (2006) or Heyneman (1993), for example – tend to include a rather questionable prioritisation of the educationalised nation-state, which can assert itself economically, politically and militarily against others or even dominate them. The epistemological assumptions also include the idea of progress, which links this power structure with education and thus tacitly conveys the idea of the global superiority of the Western, or more precisely Protestant, worldview, which is naturally assumed to be good

and statistically verifiable for everyone else. In other contexts, this would be called a 'mission'.

One hundred years before the Japanese Nakajima (1916) published his study of the four major political entities in Europe and the United States, there was an anxious look in the United States at continental Europe in the wake of the Congress of Vienna. One of the founding fathers of the United States, John Adams, wrote to another founding father, Thomas Jefferson, a memorable note about power and its tendency to think of itself as the standard and to want to dominate others: 'Power always sincerely, conscientiously, *de tres bon Foi*, believes itself Right. Power always thinks it has a great Soul, and vast Views, beyond the Comprehension of the Weak' (Adams 1816). It would do (not only) comparative education good to apply this insight to itself precisely where it is globally orchestrated.

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