



World Voices Nexus

The WCCES Chronicle

ISSN: 2522-7483

Vol. 2 No. 1 Feb. 2018

Article 4 by Kayombo & Kavenuke

Establishing Comparative Education Society in Tanzania: Opportunities and Prospects

2/5/2018

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Abstract

Comparative education as field of study has long history in many universities in the North. For the universities in the South it dates back to the 1960s. In view of the globalisation of education and the call for local actors to respond to the forces of globalisation, we have analysed the context of comparative education in Tanzania and the potential of establishing comparative education society as a response to the globalisation of education. Given the wide spread of the comparative education courses in Tanzanian universities, there are potentials for establishing a strong comparative education society that can act as an intellectual home for many scholars in country.

Introduction

There is an agreement among scholars that comparative education (hereafter, CE) has a long history (Anangisye, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009; Cowen, 2009; Kaloyannaki & Kazamias, 2009; Epstein,



their own past. Thus by comparing, we can be able to describe, contextualize, classify and explain phenomena (Stephens, 2009). In the same vein, Arnove (2007) explicitly described different levels and aspect where comparative studies in education are done. The levels and aspects are clustered into locational (ranging from that of the world/ regions/continents to that of schools/classrooms/individuals) and non-locational demographic groups (ranging from ethnic/age/religious/gender groups to entire populations) (Arnove, 2007). Comparisons of difference and similarity are fundamental to all social sciences and indeed to scholarship in general (Little, 2010).

The current global shape of CE, as discipline, distinct from philosophy of education, sociology of education, history of education and economics of education appearing as part of the field theory of education, has surfaced only in the twentieth century (Mugo & Wolhuter, 2013; Torres, 2017). Its institutionalisation as a university academic discipline dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century in some universities in the United States of America (USA) with James E. Russel teaching the first CE course in the world, at Columbia University in 1900 (Anangisyee, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009). In 1920, Isaac L. Kandel introduced CE course at Teachers College, Columbia University and thereafter, by the mid-twentieth century, CE was institutionalized in universities in the North (Anangisyee, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009). Since then, comparative studies of educational systems, problems, phenomena or processes have been conceptualised, approached and constructed from a variety of perspectives, through a variety of methodological prisms, and using a variety of research methods and techniques (Kazamias, 2009). However, in the South and Tanzania in particular, CE at universities is a fairly recent development, dating back to the 1960s (Anangisyee, 2008; Muganda & Alphonse, 2006). Since then, the discipline has evolved, taking different names without losing its comparative focus and nature.

Over the years, the teaching and research in the discipline focused on comparisons of education systems across national boundaries by examining the structure, curriculum, administration, financing, participation, policies, cultures, values, pedagogical innovations, educational achievements, teacher quality, teacher qualification and ways of learning, with the aim of understanding the factors and forces that account for the differences and similarities in these systems of education. This Chronicle piece is set to analyse the state of establishing the CE society in Tanzania specifically considering the history of the discipline in the country and the potential of using the existing CE scholars in establishing and strengthening the community in the country. In achieving that, the history of the discipline is retrospectively analysed to establish the footing of the discipline in universities. Beside, the current state of the field is analysed to establish its proliferation, which is a prerequisite for establishing a CE society in the country. In the course of building the community of the discipline which has existed in the country for about half a century, we see the potential of establishing a CE Society of Tanzania.

Comparative Education in Tanzania: A Retrospective Analysis

The institutionalisation of CE in Tanzanian higher education dates back to the 1960s when the



problems facing education in the East Africa region: Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar (Anangisye, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009). The course was running until the 1970 when the UEA was disbanded and the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) established. One can not talk about the history and development of CE without acknowledging the role of the UDSM in advancing the field. Over the years, several courses using CE approaches and methods were introduced at the UDSM as summarised in the following table:

Course	Aim/Focus
<i>History, Theory and Practice of education.</i>	The course introduced students to the problems of education as they affected Tanzania, in the wider context of traditional, colonial and post-independence education in Africa and beyond.
<i>Contemporary education in East Africa</i>	The course focuses on an analysis of the educational development in three East African countries (Tanzania, Kenya & Uganda).
<i>Comparative Education</i>	The course intended to introduce students to the field of comparative education focusing on its history and methodologies as a discipline, analysis of global educational trends and innovations in selected countries.
<i>Philosophy of Education – Comparative Practice</i>	The course addressed philosophy and education in the light of case studies drawn from several selected countries -United States of America, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, China and Cuba.
<i>Development and Trends in Teacher Education</i>	<i>*Information not available</i>
<i>Education in Developing Countries</i>	This course was related to education in different selected countries, mainly China and Cuba.

Source: Anangisye, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009.

Comparative Education

The Current SituationAt the advent of the new millennium, the higher education sector began to expand exponentially in Tanzania and CE continued to strengthen its footing in both old and new universities. At the UDSM, CE was maintained with a new course, *International and Comparative Education*, developed from the amalgamation of the courses *Education in Developing Countries* and *Contemporary Education in East Africa* were introduced (Anangisye, Maarman, Wolhuter, 2009). The course introduces undergraduate students to the global trends and issues in the field of education. It provides a survey of schooling practices in various educational systems around the world in comparative perspective. At the postgraduate level, students study the course *Comparative Education*. The course intends to equip students with what CE entails, assess its history and methodologies as a discipline, analyse global educational trends, and analyse educational innovations in selected countries. This course also has content on education in Tanzania from pre-colonial to date where changes are shown. Analysis of educational reforms is made showing how they are impacted by world education trends. In this light, policy implications for the



comparison of attempted solution(s) of resultant problems (Hans, 1949) many educational programmes have incorporated CE in their syllabus. Other universities, apart from UDSM, have also introduced CE courses at both, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For instance, the University of Dodoma (UDOM) has courses titled *Comparative and International Education* and *Comparative Education* for undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively (UDOM, 2017). The St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) has a *Comparative Education* course taught for Master of Education Management and Planning students (SAUT, 2015). A CE course is also being offered by Tumaini University for undergraduate and postgraduate students (Tumaini University Makumira, 2015). The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) offers the CE course for Master of Education students (OUT, 2017). Mzumbe University also offers *Comparative Education* course for Bachelor of Education (BED) and Master of Arts in Education students (Mzumbe University, 2015). The list is countless, almost all universities that offer educational programmes, both undergraduate and postgraduate, have CE course(s) in their syllabus. This is not surprising as many of these universities modelled their programmes on the UDSM.

The Potential for Establishing a Comparative Education Society

As we have hinted before, the Tanzanian higher education sector has grown exponentially in the past two decades. In the same pace, educational programmes at the undergraduate and post graduate levels have increased as a response to the demand for experts in education at various levels from pre-primary to higher education. As seen in the previous section of this piece, CE is widely taught and researched in Tanzanian universities. In that case, the number of scholars is increasing as well, thus providing a fertile ground for the establishment of a formal CE society for the purpose of bringing these scholars together to identify, discuss, deliberate and take action to issues emerging from this mounting field of study. This will provide an opportunity to collectively link global CE agenda with the local agenda.

The transformation that took place by the end of the 1960s which saw CE being transformed into comparative and international education, with a composition of researchers and practitioners who were multi-disciplinary, cross-national and international in perspective have made the field open to more scholars (Steiner-Khamsi, 2009). The inclusion of international education enable the extension of CE analysis from mere comparison of similarities and differences to include international education. International education has fostered the extension of the boundaries of knowledge about education beyond single nations and cultures to involve the practices of analysis, advocacy and cross border activity (Little, 2010). There are many international education scholarships and activities such as teaching, research and community services taking place in the country that need to be brought together by the envisaged CE society. The situation in the country is similar to what Little (2010) observed when she argued:

Increasing numbers of scholars are involved in researching 'other' national systems, are comparing aspects of their own systems with 'elsewhere', are exploring the impacts of regional and global



will enrich professional career in a truly special and unique way as an intellectual home (Epstein, 2016) for CE scholars in the country.

Conclusion

In this chronicle piece, we have analysed the state of building the CE society in Tanzania specifically considering the history of the discipline in the country and the potential(s) of using the existing CE scholars in establishing and strengthening the society in the country. We have explored the role of UDSM in the footing of CE as a field of study in the country. Modelling the UDSM, many universities which launched educational programmes in the past two decades incorporated CE in the syllabus. By doing so, many scholars have been engaged in the field by teaching and researching. The number of scholars engaged in the field have increased, thus calling for professional association in the form of society which will act as an intellectual home.

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February 2018

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