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Book Review
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Fifty Years of Comparative Education. Edited by Michele Schweisfurth. Pp 132. Abingdon: Routledge. 2015. £85 (hbk). ISBN 978-1-138-85333-1.

This fiftieth anniversary edited edition offers a compilation of one editorial and nine articles published in a special issue of *Comparative Education* (volume 50, issue 1, February 2014) to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the journal. Authored by members of the journal's editorial board, the book covers an eclectic range of contemporary issues in the field of comparative education, including pedagogy, adult education, gender, 'big data' and scholarly mobility, and proposes to interlink these through the theme of 'silences', highlighting potentially under-researched areas of comparative education. It forms a blend of theoretical, empirical and creative pieces, with many offering personal reflections on their own research conducted throughout a career in comparative and/or international education.

After a brief introduction by Michele Schweisfurth, the book opens with a chapter by Robert Cowen on the 'stones, silences and siren songs' of comparative education, viewed over time. Importantly, Cowen seeks here to open up debate within the field around the understanding that there are many comparative educations rather than a single monolith, and expressed his desire that the field move away from conceptual blockages. Michael Crossley follows this by giving an overview of some of the debates that have arisen around global league tables such as PISA, the use of 'big data', and the uncritical transfer of educational policy, practice and (Western) research modalities, about which he has written extensively. He closes by arguing for the development of research partnerships between high income and low income countries, in order to redress the hegemony of research emanating from the Global North. Still focusing on international transfer, Julian Elliot uses a very detailed chapter to ask questions around why pedagogy appears to be more problematic when countries are trying to apply different approaches from classrooms elsewhere, highlighting the importance of acknowledging influences on schooling that come from outside the classroom.

The book then moves on to a slightly different aspect of comparative and international education, with Peter Jarvis offering a helpful overview and personal reflections on adult education and lifelong learning, and the changes in the field over the past fifty years that, as he suggests, have been driven by globalisation. From the growth of Japanese and European productivity in the 1970s that challenged the hegemony of US industry, to the use of

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‘continuing education’, ‘lifelong education’, ‘vocational education’, and ‘learning from living’, among others, Jarvis charts the changing educational needs of countries, struggling for economic survival.

Again changing gear, Terri Kim offers a thorough theoretical consideration of ‘intellect, mobility and epistemic positioning’ within comparative education. In drawing on the career narratives of Robert Ulich and Norbert Elias, he argues for a renewed appreciation of the influence of knowledge drawn from lived experiences on scientific knowledge within the field, and advocates a focus more on ‘problem finding’ rather than simply on ‘problem solving’. The next chapter takes on a contrasting but interesting slant, with David Phillips seeking to explain to readers why papers are often rejected from *Comparative Education*, and therefore offering them a better chance of getting published; in his view, what is often lacking but necessary is a fuller appreciation of the importance of history and philosophy when considering comparative education. As with many of the authors, Phillips urges comparativists to step outside the boundaries of their own discipline and reduce the amount of jargon they use.

Returning to theoretical work, Jürgen Schriewer provides a theoretically complex look at the varying branches and background ‘logics’ of comparative and international education studies – as he describes them, the epistemo-logic, the socio-logic and the globo-logic. This contrasts with what follows in the next chapter with what, for me, is the most unusual, engaging, creative and often humorous chapter of the book; indeed, I suggest it is worth picking up the book just to read this chapter. Michele Schweisfurth considers the comparative education community from a traditional anthropological, ethnographic perspective, describing it as ‘tribal grouping’, with its own rites, rituals, kinship ties, belief systems and warfare. Membership may be attained by being ‘sponsored’ by a ‘tribal elder’ (being supervised by a renowned scholar!), academic journals are the ‘tribal records’, and conferences illustrate the ‘oral tradition’. Although humorous, Schweisfurth reiterates the serious point that the discipline should be more outward-looking as ‘we also need to speak the language of the other’ (p. 108).

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The final chapter returns to the idea of ‘silences’, with Elaine Unterhalter offering an overview of the aspects and theorisations of gender that have and have not been considered within comparative education at various times, looking to her own career in South Africa and England as a case in point. In addition to her personal autobiographical reflections, Unterhalter uses linguistic terms, building on a previous taxonomy, in order to urge comparativists to consider gender as a gerund – a noun that acts like a verb – in order to not only consider education systems with regard to terms of enrolment levels of girls and boys, for example (noun), but also to acknowledge the varied and changing application of gender in practice (verb).

It is the book’s eclectic mix of historical overviews, theoretical works, former and current debates, key concerns for the future, personal reflections and creative approaches that is its strength, and allows it to appeal to a range of readers interested in the field. Therefore, this compilation will be of interest not only to those well established in the field but also to the newly initiated.