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Revisiting comparative education in Latin America: traditions, uses, and perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Comparative education is a field with a tradition that dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The field has come a long way since the times when travellers sought educational experiences that could be applied in their places of origin; it has expanded across the world, though the rhythm of knowledge production varies significantly from one region to the next. More recently, the increased attention to educational internationalisation has enlarged the pool of perspectives linked to the field. In this paper, we examine some of the more recent debates on comparative education to provide an analysis of the field within a specific context: Latin America. From a historical perspective, we analyse the continuity of, and ruptures between, the field on both global and regional fronts. We emphasise specific features of the region: how was comparison introduced, which were the main loci of production and circulation, who tends to use it at present and for what purpose. We focus on the circulation of themes and practices in three periods of time among Latin American countries. A particular form of academic institutionalisation – not driven by universities – is a unique feature of the region that differs from paradigmatic comparative education.

KEYWORDS

Educational internationalisation; Latin America; educational planning; education reforms

Introduction

Comparative education dates back to the early nineteenth century. Much has changed since the times when travellers set off in search of educational experiences to transfer to their homes countries. While the field today, with its specialised conferences and journals, is studied the world over, the rhythm of intellectual production varies considerably from region to region.

This article will look at both historical and recent discussions in comparative education to analyse the development of the field in Latin America. We will focus on how comparative education developed in a diverse region and, more specifically, on the relationship between comparison and the development of educational policies.

Latin America does not have a continuous or robust tradition of comparative education as an academic field (see Acosta 2011; Acosta and Perez Centeno 2011; Acosta and Ruiz 2015). While some countries in the region, especially those in the Southern Cone, did

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participate in what is called the 'foreigner pedagogy' when they set up their educational systems (Acosta 2011), the field did not take root or flourish as a consistent academic study (López Velarde 2000). For this reason, and others, an array of international educational agencies have intervened in the region's educational systems, specifically in their implementation, development, and reforms.

Regardless, in analysing educational development, it is possible to distinguish in the region different ways in which comparative education has been used and circulated. We argue that there are *waves of circulation* in the region's different countries, some of them more geared to comparative education as a field and others more closely linked to different uses of comparison. Similarly, there are continuities and ruptures in those waves from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century – the period which witnessed the flourishing of comparative education. These continuities and ruptures can be linked to the ways that the region's educational systems have expanded.

This article is structured in two parts. In the first, principal international trends in the development of comparative education are summarised and applied to the state of the field in Latin America. The second part examines three particular ways that comparison in education has been used in the region: comparative education as individual practice; educational comparison and planning as government practice; and comparison in the practice of international organisations operating in the region. Finally, we present a series of conclusions regarding the field along with reflections on its future development.

Comparative education: international tendencies and their development in Latin America

Significantly, comparative education emerged during a period when nation states were the principal actors in devising educational ideas and practices. The idea of the transfer of practices as well as their use in policies, that is, in the organisation of educational systems, lies at the very origin of comparative education. Early comparative education revolved around at least four major concerns, all of them tied to the problem of transfer: (1) schooling as practice transferable from one context to another; (2) the comparative method as scientific validation of those possible transfers; (3) the tension between that transfer and specific social-cultural contexts; and (4) the transfer of knowledge produced by comparison to educational policy.

As we have pointed out in previous works (Acosta and Pérez Centeno 2011; Acosta 2011; Acosta and Ruiz 2015), comparative education as a field experienced at least five distinct moments as it became institutionalised. The first moment – one completely lacking in structure – consisted of pedagogues or agents of the government travelling to more advanced countries in search of understanding educational experiences that could perhaps be applied in their home countries.

The second moment – one foundational to the field as such – began with the work of Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris (1775–1848). He ventured a proto-positivist reformulation of educational doctrines, as well as basing the development of educational theory on methodical investigation. This is a case of the transfer of educational ideas and practices based on the collection of international data.

The early twentieth century witnessed the third moment when comparative education was founded as an academic field with the creation of university departments. A period of intense circulation of ideas between thinkers in Europe, especially in England and Germany, centred on the United States, where the first university programmes and research centres in comparative education were created (see Pereyra and 2000). By this point, comparative research was not limited to identifying similarities and differences in educational systems, but took into account the analysis of broader social contexts.

The fourth moment – in the mid-twentieth century – consisted of the consolidation of comparative education as scientific field. This process saw the introduction of quasi-experimental models based on the principle of causality. This new phase was furthered by international organisations which influenced the new agendas in educational policies. The transfer of approaches intensified; the specificities of the previous period blurred, and the relationship between comparative education and educational policy formalised.

The 1990s witnessed further changes in comparative education. This fifth moment responded to the challenges posed by new global socio-economic organisations. It noted the failings of the positivist scientific models in the face of new realities: globalisation represented a breaking point in the conceptual development of the field. Much of the field's intellectual production began to focus on the problem of interconnections, which made for major revisions, reformulations, and conceptual advances. It has been argued that the societies of reference in this new phase are constructed from the standpoint of a global context of comparison; attention should be paid to a new type of global comparison, one that takes into account the transnational changes in policies and politics (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal 2003; Lingard and Rawolle 2009; Steiner-Khamsi 2015). One of the field's central concerns – transfer – is also undergoing a process of re-conceptualisation: transfer, it is argued, must not be seen as linear or unidirectional, but rather as circular and, in some ways, reciprocal (see Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow 2012).

As noted above, Latin America does not have a continuous or robust tradition in the academic field of comparative education. Indeed, it is difficult to conceptualise the region as a whole, not only in relation to comparative education, but also to overall social development: the region is diverse, with an array of geographies and climates, social and cultural groups. That diversity is reflected in the countries' varied social structures, distributions of wealth, customs, and languages. Notwithstanding this diversity, the region does have common heritages, histories, and problems, and faces similar or analogous challenges in both politics and the development of social institutions.

One element of that common heritage is the development of educational systems and the introduction of comparative education in the region. After the wars of independence, the new nation states began to take charge of primary education; according to the notion of common education, the state was envisioned as a teacher state. Through social and cultural homogenisation, Latin American educational systems contributed to national integration and to the development of citizenship.

At this point, the first and second moments in the development of comparative education as a field converge. In configuring their educational systems, some countries in the region, particularly ones in the Southern Cone, played an active role in 'foreigner pedagogy'. As López Velarde (2000) points out, there were cases in the nineteenth century of government officials travelling abroad in search of educational practices to transfer back

home: José Luis Mora in Mexico, Andrés Bello in Venezuela and Chile, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in Argentina and Chile, and José Pedro Varela in Uruguay. Some of those educators participated in early attempts at the scientific organisation of comparative education. Sarmiento, for instance, edited *El Monitor de la Educación Común*, an Argentinean public journal on education that always opened with data, tables, and accounts of educational experiences beyond the region (Acosta 2011).[1]

In Latin American countries, unlike countries that modernised early on, the link between educational systems and economic development was weak through the 1950s at the very least; expansion towards outlying regions was riddled with disparity. Developmentalist policies, some under authoritarian regimes, consolidated the educational systems in some countries and considerably expanded them in others. The process was akin to the massification of educational systems in the developed world; nevertheless, educational supply in the region continued to be unevenly distributed (OREALC UNESCO 1992). In 1960 the net rate of school enrolment in Latin America for children aged 6–11 was 57.7%; by 1980 it had reached 82.4%. For children aged 12–17, in 1960 the rate was 36.3%; by 1980 that had reached 62.6%. This data shows the expansion of primary education coupled with ongoing debates in relation to access to and completion of secondary school.

This partial and unequal expansion of educational systems in the region is related to how comparative education developed. There are no parallels with later moments in the development of the field: academic institutionalisation was scarce, and the introduction of scientific comparison was largely the result of national and international organisations' involvement in the planning of education. As we will see in the next section, the institutionalisation of comparative education is bound to the moment when educational systems in the region were expanding. By the 1960s it was understood that comprehensive planning was necessary to furthering the objective of expansion. Comparison, then, was more closely tied to ways of producing knowledge on educational systems for the sake of diagnoses and of calculation of the resources necessary for its expansion (Latapí 1970; Ruiz 2007).

Since the 1990s repeated structural reforms of Latin American educational systems failed to take into account that the systems are not homogeneous. Even when the reform programmes were similar, they yielded diverse and disparate results. These reforms aimed to extend schooling, and modified different aspects of the educational systems, such as curriculum development; vocational programmes; the evaluation of different educational levels; teacher-education programmes; and university education. During the 1990s, states were pressured by international organisations like the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to implement structural reforms to their educational systems, as part of neoliberal reforms in public spending. The circulation and interconnection of educational policies transfer – central concerns of contemporary comparative education – were topics introduced in this context (see, for example, Beech 2011).[2]

In this section, we presented five moments in the development of comparative education as a field. We also provided an overview of the situation in Latin America, highlighting the relationship between how its educational systems and comparative education developed. In the following section, we will present three waves of circulation in the use of comparison in the region.

Circulation of comparison and education in Latin America

The first section looked at the limitations of the moments in comparative education in analysing regional situations. This section delves more deeply into three particular ways – which we call waves – that comparison in education was deployed in the region. We will discuss comparative education as individual practice; educational comparison and planning as government practice; and comparison in the practice of international organisations operating in the region.

Comparative education as individual practice

This wave in the circulation of comparison began in the late nineteenth century and encompassed most of the twentieth century. Two groups of actors were active in this stage of comparative education in Latin America: travelling pedagogues or government agents, and academics. Despite different environments and periods, they had one thing in common: the low level of institutionalisation in their practices.

We have mentioned above the various travellers and the government agents from the region who studied foreign experiences; individuals like José Luis Mora in Mexico, Andrés Bello in Venezuela and Chile, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in Argentina and Chile, and José Pedro Varela in Uruguay. These figures made comparisons by describing their experiences in public reports.

One example is *Educación popular* (*Popular Education*), the book that Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1834–1888) wrote travelling in Europe and North America in 1849, at the behest of the Chilean government. Sarmiento visited Spain, France, Italy, Germany, England, Canada, and the United States; he was particularly impressed by the educational systems he found in Boston and New York. His report had a significant impact on the Chilean educational debates of the time and foretold the Argentinean debate over the 1884 Act of Common Education (1420 Act), which established free and compulsory primary education (Tedesco and Zacarías 2011).

For the purposes of our argument, two characteristics of the text stand out: first, the detailed nature of the account with its observations *in situ*, and data from primary sources; second, Sarmiento's use of the text to put forth his own educational ideal. Indeed, Sarmiento had requested to make the journey to 'avoid the difficulties and uncertainties likely to be produced in putting into practice theoretical knowledge, the only knowledge in existence at the time for carrying out the functions of the principal of a Normal School … ' (Sarmiento 1849/2011, 37; translation ours); after the journey he came up with guidelines for setting up a school system. Although it could be argued that this use of comparison was an institutional practice of the state, the fact is that many of the missions were promoted by the travellers themselves and the influence of their reports was linked to their publication as books.

Academics at universities were the second group of actors in this first wave of the circulation of comparison; they arose in the twentieth century. Comparative education had yet to be established on a wide scale as a topic in teacher-training programmes or universities. This low level of institutionalisation meant little theoretical output; comparative education and its development were left to a few authors whose publications tended to become reference books. This was true throughout the twentieth century.

López Velarde (2000) could identify only three works on comparative education published between 1940 and 1960: books by Cuban Ema Pérez, by Brazilian Lorenzo Filho, and by Mexican J. Manuel Villalpando. The work by Argentinean Diego Márquez, published in the 1970s, is considered a landmark. Argentinean Gustavo Cirigliano did a study of the state of analysis in comparative education, but that project was undertaken for UNESCO.

This lack of local development is perhaps due to the fact that advances in comparative education at European and North American universities in the 1950s were largely unconnected to the region's context. The work produced at major centres of comparative education, along with their various theoretical and methodological approaches, had little to say about the realities in the Latin American countries, still dealing with the extension of primary education (López Velarde 2000).

The economic and political crises of the 1970s and 1980s, in the framework of the international dissemination of education promoted by international organisations (chiefly UNESCO), brought a de-localisation of research in comparative education in underdeveloped countries (Monfredini 2011). Significant in this context are the reflections yielded by the Fifth World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, held in Paris from July 2 to 6, 1984. Though the theme of the event was 'Dependence and Interdependence in Education: The Role of Comparative Education', in reference to dependency theory – a concept of Latin American origin – there were almost no participants from the region. *Prospects*, the UNESCO's journal, published a special issue on the congress. The Latin American voices in that publication were Velloso from Brazil and Olivera Lahore, an Argentinean based in Costa Rica. Critical of the notion of dependency, the former warned against uncritical acceptance of so-called international cooperation (Velloso 1985), while the latter relativised the very idea of dependency, situating it on the analytical plane of cultural influences (Olivera 1985).

Similarly, production from the 1980s failed to integrate the region into the practices and debates in comparative education. There were, of course, exceptions, like the work of Brazilian thinker Ciavatta Franco and (1992), which used dependency theories, and of Arenas de Sanjuán (1984), which was tied to theories being developed in Spain at the time – classical approaches to comparative education produced by ageing department heads – developed at remaining university *cátedras*. Similarly, by the end of the decade, there were early works by professors at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, though their focus was on comparative studies in higher education.

Mexico was the locus of the most intense institutional activity in the 1970s and 1980s, which can be explained by, among other things, the creation of the Center of Educational Studies where Pablo Latapí (1967, 1970) published works in comparative and international education; the publication in Mexico of the *Latin American Review of Educational Studies*, with contributions from Paulston (1971), Carnoy (1971), and Brazilian thinker Gouveia (1971); the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) which took place in that country in 1978; and the First Latin American Forum of Comparative Education held at the University of Colima in 1980. In any case, the limited exchange between researchers and the absence of long-standing national academic societies in the field is, indisputably, the most striking feature.[3]

Educational comparison and planning as government practice

Starting in the 1950s, international consensus emerged on the need for detailed planning to give direction to educational policies in regions like Latin America. An attempt was made to modernise the state's administrative structures; planning became one of the methodologies central to achieving efficiency in the administration of public policies as well as the modernisation of the state. It was believed that planning would permit rational and precise allocation of resources and any necessary structural changes. Education, in turn, was envisaged as capable of effecting social and economic development.

Integral planning of education meant formulating and implementing an educational policy by means of a programmed administration (Romero Lozano 1965). The principal theoretical assumptions underlying integral planning in education were (Windham 1975):

- The economic system depended on the educational system insofar as it provided the educated and skilled workforce necessary to economic development. In view of this posited relationship between education and employment, not every kind of training was useful for economic growth.
- The need to accurately forecast increases in the demand for a well-trained workforce (in the formal education system) on the basis of future occupational changes; the assumption was that future changes in the relationship between employment and economic growth could be calculated.

This regional circulation of these new approaches to educational planning across the region brought about the creation of government planning offices, some of them dedicated solely to education, with others geared to broader national economic planning. Early on, the efforts of these planning offices were mostly aimed at the systematisation and analysis of educational statistics and at diagnosing educational systems; there was not much actual planning. Later on, however, studies dedicated not only to diagnosis, but also to educational policy design, were carried out. In this context, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) and the UNESCO created an Educational Planning Division in the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), an organisation directed by Simón Romero Lozano.[4] The regional programmes and seminars given by ILPES and UNESCO constituted essential instruments for the consolidation and communication of educational planning.

Neither the meaning nor the scope of integral planning was defined in conceptual or empirical terms. Important questions were not duly formulated, questions like: What does planning mean? Does it encompass the whole system or just one educational level? Regardless, educational planning agencies proliferated throughout the region as practically every country created educational planning offices. Parallel, rather than coordinated, structures for educational planning were established at the ministerial and national levels.

The studies carried out by these offices served, nonetheless, to show how schooling was actually functioning: What was the school dropout rate? How many graduates were there at every level and in every region? How many students repeated grades? Data important to measuring performance was thus obtained. To carry out and assess these studies, educational statistics were required. Both governments and the population now had access to detailed information on the state of education on the national, regional, and

local levels. The comparison of socio-educational descriptions and analysis undoubtedly took place in these institutional environments, though that did not necessarily lead to scientific research of the sort carried out at the time in other contexts like the United States and Europe.

By the mid-1960s, these offices had gained technical expertise and administrative efficiency – thanks, in part, to international and regional seminars and conferences in which government agents participated. Integral education planning led to the publication of planning-books that were global in nature, books that encompassed every area and section of formal education. The aim was to transform education as a whole, which meant that the texts were overly general. The publications were envisioned as reference books for educational policies and their implementation over time. The plans revolved around fixed points of reference that failed to take into account changing conditions or to allow for innovation – a limitation now recognised as significant. Analysis of these documents evidences the lack of inner coherence in many of the region's educational plans. Plan-books did not align overall objectives and specific projects, which has led to the conclusion that the books were not a coherent whole (Ruiz 2007).

These plans failed in almost every country: the objectives were never met, and changing circumstances and contextual problems – neither of which were duly taken into account – had a negative effect on their ability to forecast. Overly rigid, the plans could not adjust to sudden changes in countries characterised by political and economic instability. One UNESCO document, released in 1974, argued that the application of governmental educational plans in Latin America was merely formal; the plans had not served to aid decision-making, they were merely technical documents that offered a general diagnosis of the state of education in a country (OREALC 1974).

Comparative education as a field of knowledge was totally absent in the entire regional circulation of the approach to integral educational planning. Due to the field's weak academic development, it did not have the impact foreseen by theorists like, for example, the Spaniard Pedro Roselló; in the early 1960s he had spoken of a dynamic comparative education capable of inducing or anticipating future scenarios in education (Márquez 1972). Though related to comparative education as *scientific* field and to its methods, this wave of regional circulation was not informed by the academic field of comparative education. The integral planning approach instead made use of statistical comparison: in a context of weak educational development, governments, along with international organisations, imposed the systematic use of educational quantification and statistical models to guide educational policies according to the formula of integral planning.

Comparison in the practice of international organisations in the region

The 1980s witnessed regional economic crises along with the return to democracy in many countries. Educational systems were reformed and redefined; they were diagnosed as a sector in crisis, where the need for international intervention was re-examined. A new period of circulation of comparison began, principally in the context of educational reforms. Studies yielded comparative data that informed decision-making processes as well as reforms aimed at resolving the educational crisis. In the framework of structural adjustment and of austerity programmes in social policy, international financial organisations pressured governments to cut funding for educational programmes.

Latin American countries were affected by the recommendations on education made by the Organisation of American States; UNESCO (through its regional office based in Chile, the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean – OREALC); the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI); CEPAL; the WB; the IDB; and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). While some organisations acted mainly as agencies of technical cooperation (UNESCO and OEI), others acted as funding bodies (the WB and the IDB). The intervention of all of these entities in technical cooperation made themselves felt increasingly through reports and sectorial, national, and regional documents. In the area of education, these international organisations deployed a twofold strategy: (1) as a pillar of social policy, and (2) as part of economic policy geared to improving productivity.

The international studies produced by both these types of organisations made increasing use of comparison over the course of a period when reforms deepened. The region's educational systems, their expansion, and range were compared, as were educational results (graduate rates, years of schooling, dropout indicators, and so forth). Systems were ranked, in effect, in terms of quality, mainly at the university level.

Starting in the late twentieth century, particularly in the last decade, organisations like the OEI, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP UNESCO) – through its regional seat in Buenos Aires created in 1998 – the Program of Promotion of Educational Reform in Latin America, and the Caribbean-PREAL and the CEPAL, geared their efforts towards regional comparison and the development of case studies. IIEP UNESCO Buenos Aires in alliance with OEI created the Information System for Educational Trends in Latin America (SITEAL), which was specifically aimed at producing comparative information on Latin American educational systems.

Indeed, the documents produced by these organisations in the last 10 years show that the agencies geared to regional integration, and to disseminating knowledge and research in education, make use of comparison fluctuating between case studies and regional comparison. The themes of the documents are largely the same, mostly concerns arose during the era of reform mentioned above (ICT, evaluation of quality and exclusion in education, of the teaching and learning processes, of school culture and higher education – particularly in relation to teacher accreditation and education); the approach is qualitatively oriented.[5]

By contrast, the organisations that generate regional data and indicators are more quantitative in their approach. SITEAL[6] and CEPAL,[7] to name just two, look to statistical publications and make use of diverse indicators tackled from national and regional perspectives. A number of CEPAL's publications are based on analysis of so-called successful cases.[8]

Two elements stand out in these comparisons: the weight of the regional dimension in the comparison of educational indicators in the region's different countries; which experiments are considered successful, and used as the basis for 'good practices' or cited as 'lessons learned' for Latin American countries. PREAL reports are especially prone to speaking in terms of 'good practices'.

While this third wave in the use of comparison is not centred on universities or other academic environments, it does engage in the transfers of policies, a core dimension of international scholarship on comparative education. The use of comparison in terms of 'lessons learned' does not mean that transfer is problematised – quite the opposite.

Indeed, this would be the case in producing *comparative information for the development of educational policies*: information made more robust by the use of qualitative as well as quantitative methods but closer to a comparative educative of solutions (Cowen 2017).

Towards a new wave of circulation?

At present, participation in comparative education in Latin America continues to be largely individual, though more nuanced, by the creation and extension of national comparative education societies in the last decade, which sometimes serve as an institutional platform for university academics. Five national comparative education societies were formed or re-established at the beginning of the twenty-first century: Venezuela (2000), Argentina (2001), Mexico (2003), and Uruguay (2009). In 2014, the *Sociedad Iberoamericana de Educación Comparada* was founded comprising several national societies in Latin America, along with the Spanish and the Portuguese societies of comparative education. The world congresses organised by the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in Brazil (1987), Cuba (2004), and Argentina (2013) may have catalysed the formation of new national scholarly societies in comparative education in the region.[9] Furthermore, the next World Congress of Comparative Education Societies will take place in Mexico in 2019.

Compilations and journals have been published by these national societies. For example, the Mexican Society for Comparative Education has in recent years published a group of books on comparative education in Latin America, as well as on internationalisation and regional comparison. Similarly, the Argentinean Society of Comparative Studies in Education (SAECE) established in 2010 the *Latin American Review of Comparative Education* (*Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Comparada*, RELEC). Thus far, 10 issues of the review with some 75 articles have been published. A look at the articles published in this journal shows that 15% focus on theoretical–methodological problems in the field of comparative education, whilst 31% are related primarily to the international comparison, and 19.4% deal with globalisation and internationalisation in education (Acosta and Ruiz 2016).

Nevertheless, this new manifestation of comparative education's 'way of being' in Latin America bears similarities with the previous waves. First, it is a particular – non-traditional – form of academic institutionalisation, insofar as it is not developed at universities – this indeed could be a unique feature of Latin America that differs from paradigmatic comparative education. Second, it is linked to the agenda of educational policy. Indeed, at the last five biennial meetings of the SAECE, 30% of papers presented addressed policy issues while 18% dealt with educational reform (Acosta 2016). The articles published in the RELEC reflect the same tendency: 41% of the contents of the first nine issues deal with policy, and 24% with inclusion in the educational system (Acosta 2016). At this point, we can ask if we are already in the presence of a fourth and new wave of circulation of comparison in Latin America.

Conclusion

In this article, we analysed the development of comparative education in Latin America. We compared how the field of comparative education was structured between countries

that modernised early and in Latin American countries. Common elements include the notion of transfer in the configuration of the educational systems, foreign journeys as a means to produce knowledge, and the comparison of data to develop educational policies. The relative weakness of comparative education as academic field explains in part the differences in its development in the region versus other parts of the world. In this framework, and in an attempt to conceptualise other forms of comparative education, we suggested that educational comparison has, in the Latin American region, a specific 'way of being'; one characterised by distinct waves of circulation tied to educational policies aimed at the extension of compulsory schooling.

The first wave entailed individual practices of comparison, mainly travellers in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Those practices were more enmeshed in the development of comparative education as a field. We call them 'individual practices' because of their low level of institutionalisation.

The second wave encompassed the rise of educational planning in Latin America in the mid-twentieth century and the need to further expand educational systems. What was at stake in this wave was not comparative education per se, but rather the appropriation of tools of comparison by national and international organisations (planning agencies). A link can be found here to what some authors consider as the moment of consolidation of comparative education as scientific field due to the use of quantitative methods in the study of educational development.

The third wave ensued in the late twentieth century, when reforms in the Latin American educational systems were enacted at the insistence of international finance organisations while others provided technical assistance in conjunction with local education ministries. Though comparative education was not academic in nature during this wave either, it was different from the previous wave in several senses: first, comparative information was produced, during this third wave, to guide policies to *extend and reform* educational systems; second, the scope for comparison was regional – within Latin America – rather than local/national; third, the methodology during this wave included qualitative, not only quantitative, studies. Producing comparative information, developing 'good practices', and heeding 'lessons learned' were privileged practices in the line of a comparative education of solutions (Cowen 2017).

We can assert that the first wave – comparative education as an individual practice – anticipated a later tendency mentioned above: academics grouped in national associations of comparative education, which could be a new way of regional circulation of comparison. Pertinent as well, of course, will be the contents of other congresses and meetings and of the publications of other associations throughout the region. The field of comparative education entails multiple irregular flows: as Cowen puts it, 'There are no rules of morphology'. Meanwhile, questions are raised about the future direction of this new manifestation of comparative education in Latin America: it has yet to be determined if it is geared to 'questions of governance or is, rather, part of the historical journey that is comparative education' (Cowen 2017).

Notes

1. *El Monitor de la Educación Común* was a publication edited by the National Education Council from 1881 to 1976 with some interruptions during the fifties (1949–1959) and during the

sixties (1961–1966) due to political issues. As from the first number of the journal it included articles which developed the comparison of class days with countries such as the United States; the proposals of feminising the teaching profession in countries such as France and Prussia; reports of an inspector on comparative data between the United States, Buenos Aires, and Chile (Year I, N. 2); examples of 'fines and legal penalties imposed by law on educational functionaries, taken from the education laws of New York' (Year I, N. 3). Furthermore, a project of resolution is proposed in journal number 7:

> … Point III, Art. 7: There will be created in the Capital a Magazine of Public Instruction under the direction of the Director General. This magazine will be composed of four principal sections: 1 Original works referring to education in the Republic; 2 Transcriptions or translations of works by foreign educationalists; 3 Review of foreign educational movements; 4 Official documents. (Year I, N. 7, 1882)

2. In Latin America, structural adjustments were defined by the WB, the International Monetary Fund, and other financial organisations. They implied a set of programs of stabilisation and adjustment, which involve the reduction of state spending, the devaluation of currencies to promote exports, the increase of public and private savings and a significant reduction in the state sector. These programs sought to liberalise international exchange and eliminate protectionism. Oreja Cerruti and Vior (2016) also point out that, since the mid-twentieth century, the role of international organisations in setting public policy in Latin America has grown. That influence takes the shape of communicating policy approaches and creating consensus on them; setting goals and national commitments towards meeting them; and policy funding and restrictions based on performance. In education, international funding organisations, along with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Program for the Promotion of Educational Reform in Latin American and the Caribbean (PREAL), have backed the reforms in the region's educational systems—which varied from country to country according to history and specific traits – implemented starting in the 1990s.
3. There were several national societies in Latin America in the 1970–1990 period (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Cuba), but were short-lived: Argentina (1970s); Colombia (1980s). See Masemann, Bray, and Manzon (2007).
4. Another institution equally important for its impact on educational policies, although only in Brazil, was the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP).
5. For the case of the IIEP, see: 'Los sistemas nacionales de inspección y/o supervisión escolar. Revisión de la literatura y análisis de casos', 'La educación secundaria en foco: análisis de políticas de inclusión en Argentina, Canadá, Chile y España', 'El desarrollo profesional docente centrado en la escuela. Concepciones, políticas y experiencias'. These are available at: http://www.iipe-buenosaires.org.ar/documentos. For the OEI, see the special issues of the last five years, with respect to the educational programs involving technology in the classrooms or the evaluation of education, where the kind of comparison oscillates between regional and national comparison, and case studies. They are available at: http://www.rieoei.org/rie_contenedor.php?numero=rie56, and http://www.rieoei.org/rie53.htm, respectively. With respect to other problems, such as childhood in school or the learning of curricular areas (such as mathematics or reading), the case studies seem to be those with the highest degree of incidence when dealing with these issues. They are, respectively, available at: http://www.rieoei.org/rie43.htm, http://www.rieoei.org/rie46.htm.
6. The SITEAL, due to its goal, produces documents based on quantitative information, and generates a database with standardised indicators which arise from national census in the countries of Latin America and links to other sources of information. The 'Atlas of educational inequalities in Latin America' analyses the territorial dispositions of the social and economic phenomena of the region, the 'SITEAL database', the 'Statistical Summaries' the 'Notebooks' (such as 'Configuraciones espaciales de escenarios urbanos y rurales. Desafíos pendientes en los procesos de inclusión educativa', to take only some examples) point in this direction.

7. Examples of this are publications such as 'Aporte del sistema educativo a la reducción de las brechas digitales. Una mirada desde las mediciones PISA', 'Trabajo, educación y salud de las niñas en América Latina y el Caribe: indicadores elaborados en el marco de la plataforma de Beijing', their 'Anuarios estadísticos de América Latina y el Caribe'. Available at: http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/search.asp?desDoc=Educaci%F3n&functioninput=Educaci%F3n&cat=37&tipDoc=&pais=&idioma=&agno=.
8. For example: 'La incorporación de tecnologías digitales en educación. Modelos de identificación de buenas prácticas', 'Las políticas de tecnología para escuelas en América Latina y el mundo: visiones y lecciones'. Available at: http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/search.asp?desDoc=Educaci%F3n&functioninput=Educaci%F3n&cat=37&tipDoc=&pais=&idioma=&agno=.
9. Similar processes are discussed in Manzon (2011), and Masemann, Bray, and Manzon (2007).

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