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Comparative education and international education in the history of *Compare*: boundaries, overlaps and ambiguities

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The fields of comparative and international education have overlapping identities and are commonly paired. The overlap and pairing has been evident in the history of *Compare* as well as elsewhere. However, the indistinct nature of the boundaries can cause conceptual difficulties. Taking a historical perspective not only on *Compare* and its sponsoring association but also on other journals and their sponsoring bodies, this article highlights some of the ambiguities and argues for stronger definitional and conceptual clarity.

**Keywords:** comparative education; international education; histories; academic fields and disciplines

Introduction

Debate about the differences and overlaps between the related fields of comparative and international education has a long history. Wilson (1994) described the pair of fields as Siamese twins, noting common as well as distinct identities. Wilson’s remarks were chiefly oriented towards the United States of America (USA) and the work of its Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), but they could also have applied to the United Kingdom (UK) and its British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE). Instructive parallels may also be identified in the journals of those two bodies, which for many decades have had titles that present only comparative education and thus exclude international education. In the case of *Compare*, only in 2009 was International added to the subtitle of the journal alongside Comparative Education.

Patterns in the USA and UK do not necessarily match those in other parts of the world. Cowen (2000, 333) suggested that it might be more appropriate to refer to comparative educations, in the plural. Within any one country, groups of scholars following different paradigms commonly work independently of each other; and the dominant characteristics of the field as a whole in, say, China are very different from those in Brazil or Australia. A similar remark may be made about international education: the term is used in so many different ways by so many different people that it might be better to talk about international educations, in the plural, rather than to imply that the field is homogeneous. And while some writers have asserted that comparative and international education has become a single, unified field, it appears that not all authors in *Compare* have agreed.

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With these themes in mind, the article begins with some institutional history as it concerns *Compare*. It then notes conceptual literature on disciplines and fields, which provides a framework to observe a range of interpretations of the boundaries and nature of both comparative education and international education. The essay then turns to some explicit policy statements in *Compare*, noting evolutions over the decades. Further light on the patterns is shed by a review of organisational structures in other parts of the world, and particularly the member societies of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). The penultimate section comments on the extent to which actors in the field feel that the terminological debates are (or are not) important, and the final section draws threads together in conclusion.

Some institutional history

At the outset, *Compare* was the newsletter, launched in 1968, of the British Section of the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). The mother society had been established in 1963 (Cowen 1980, 99), and the British Section was established in 1966 (Sutherland, Watson, and Crossley 2007, 156). CESE has remained in existence with its original name, which focuses only on comparative education. Initially, the same applied to the British Section, which in 1979 became the British Comparative Education Society (BCES). However, in 1983 the word International was added in an effort to bridge a ‘North-South division’ between a group of comparative education scholars who were largely concerned with the description and analysis of education systems in industrialised societies and a different group who focused on less developed countries (Watson and King 1991, 246–7). The new body was thus called the British Comparative and International Education Society (BCIES). In 1997 the BCIES merged with the British Association of Teachers and Researchers in Overseas Education (BATROE) to become the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE). The new name was ratified at the inaugural conference in 1998. Crossley’s keynote address at the conference highlighted renewed growth, the need for ongoing reconceptualisation, and the value of bridging new and existing research cultures and traditions within the broader field (Crossley 1999; see also Crossley and Watson 2003; Crossley 2008).

The subtitle of *Compare* did not change with the name of the Society. It was called *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* not only during the BCES era but also during the BCIES era and the first decade of the BAICE era. This had a parallel in the USA, where the Comparative Education Society (CES) had been founded in 1956. The CES added International to its name in 1968 (Sherman Swing 2007, 103), thereby becoming the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). However, the Society’s journal remained the *Comparative Education Review*.

The parallel nature of the histories, in which International featured in the names of the US and British societies but not in their journals, ended in 2009. With effect from Vol. 39, No. 1, *Compare* has been subtitled *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. This change was introduced without public remark from the editors. It was no doubt logical for both words to appear in the title of the journal, though a question might have been raised about the ordering. In the title of the Association (BAICE), International comes before Comparative; but in the title of the journal, Comparative comes before International. Readers might also have expected to be informed of the significance of the change, if any, for editorial policy.
Academic tribes and territories

Becher and Trowler (2001) analysed the forces which shape disciplinary boundaries in the academic world. Using the metaphor of tribes and territories, they examined on the one hand the distinctive cultures of academic communities (tribes), and on the other hand the ideas with which academics work (territories). Taking an example, Becher and Trowler (2001, 342) raised the question as to whether statistics had become sufficiently separate from its parent discipline, mathematics, to constitute a discipline on its own. The answer, they suggested, depended on the extent to which leading academic institutions recognised the hiving off in terms of their organisational structures (that is, whether they considered statistics to deserve a fully-fledged department), and on the degree to which a freestanding international community had emerged with its own professional journals. At the same time, they pointed out, institutions may decide to establish departments in particular fields but find that the intellectual validity of those departments remains challenged by established academic opinion.

Becher and Trowler classified education as a discipline, but described it as soft and applied. The disciplinary basis of education is not undisputed since although it does have departments, degrees and specialist journals, its intellectual substance tends to draw on other disciplines and rather rarely to assert distinctive characteristics which are unique to the study of education. If it is questionable whether the whole domain of education could be considered a discipline, it is even more questionable as to whether comparative education could be considered one. Some writers (for example, Chabbott 2003, 116; Higginson 1999, 341; Kerawalla 1995, 660) have described comparative education as a discipline, but it might more appropriately be described as a field of study – and, indeed, a somewhat amorphous one which lacks a unifying thread (see, for example, Epstein and Carroll 2005, 62; Watson 1998, 9).

It must be recognised not only that terms such as discipline and field are vague and potentially contentious, but also that dominant notions of disciplinary boundaries vary in different parts of the world. Lawn and Furlong (2009) noted differences between the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe. They suggested that:

There is a stronger ‘European’ notion of discipline, in which community created standards and qualifications protect the borders of the discipline, which can be contrasted with a ‘weaker’ UK version in which ‘being interested’ is treated as the equivalent of being qualified. (Lawn and Furlong 2009, 544)

Lawn and Furlong added that educational studies in the UK ‘might have lost the powerful disciplinary claims and procedures of the classical European model while retaining only the sociality and intensification of pragmatism under pressure’. They recognised that a different view of disciplines in social science might refer to them as a ‘project’ without clear boundaries but in which ‘its ideas are sharply contested, and legitimacy is something that has to be struggled for’. They concluded that:

This view, of an active and contested discipline, as an intellectual and practical project, is probably more closely linked to the numbers of sub-fields and groups of fragmented enthusiasts in the UK who are able to organise seminars and create websites and eJournals without reference to disciplinary boundaries. Post-disciplinary elements and actors may network or be sustained by a university department without reference back to a common project, nor indeed, with any necessity for contestation as they work only within micro-communities. (Lawn and Furlong 2009, 544)
These remarks were in the introductory article to a special issue of a journal which then focused on the roles of four ‘foundation disciplines’ in the field of educational studies, namely sociology, psychology, philosophy and history, plus economics which had become ‘highly influential in recent years’ (550). Comparative and international education was also given space (Crossley and Watson, 2009), though Lawn and Furlong recognised (2009, 550) that ‘some might claim that this is not a discipline at all – in an epistemological sense; yet it has established itself as a very important ‘perspective’ and perhaps in sociological terms has many of the hallmarks of a sub-disciplinary field’.

Such discussion highlights much overlap and ambiguity, with different communities choosing to label the fields (or sub-fields, or disciplines, or sub-disciplines) to which they belong and in which they work as comparative education, international education, comparative and international education, or possibly international and comparative education. One would then need to note the implications of each of these labels.

Beginning with comparative education, one might expect the unifying characteristic to be a methodological focus based on explicit forms of comparison. However, few authors in the specialist journals, books and conferences pay close attention to methodological matters including units for comparison. By tradition, the field has focused on cross-national comparisons; but there is no strong methodological reason why this should be the case, and it can be argued that greater focus on intra-national studies alongside cross-national studies would enrich the field (Bray and Thomas 1995). Similarly, although comparison of national systems of education has been a traditional focus which tenaciously remains the principal level of focus in at least some quarters (Wollhuter 2008, 325), a strong case can be made for many other units for comparison including times, cultures, values and ways of learning (Bray, Adamson, and Mason 2007).

Similar remarks apply to international education, which has perhaps an even weaker sense of internal cohesion. Some writers, including ones in Compare, use the term international education to describe the work of international schools and such bodies as the International Baccalaureate Organization (for example, Cambridge and Thompson 2004; Hill 2007). Others link the term to promotion of intercultural understanding through student exchanges, internationalisation of textbooks, and operation of international organisations such as United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (for example, Husén 1994). As with comparative education, some scholars describe international education as a discipline (for example, Sylvester 2007, 11), but most would consider it a field. Thompson (2002, 6), presenting the Editorial in the inaugural issue of the Journal of Research in International Education (JRIE), stated that:

The establishment of a serious ‘field of study’ called international education has, for some time, been a possibility amongst the increasing numbers of those thinking about and researching into both theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, and it will be a principal objective of the JRIE to make a significant contribution to its realisation.

Meanwhile, Thompson noted (2002, 5) the ‘lack of agreement, among theorists and practitioners alike, concerning the fundamental nature of international education’, adding that the term had such wide usage that ‘almost any statement on international education offers ample opportunity for ambiguity in interpretation’.
In considering the differences between comparative and international education, Epstein (1994, 918) described comparativists as ‘primarily scholars interested in explaining why educational systems and processes vary and how education relates to wider social factors and forces’. In contrast, he described international educators as people who ‘use findings derived from comparative education to understand better their ability to make policy relating to programs such as those associated with international exchange and understanding’. Such distinctions were shared by others, including at least some editors of *Compare*. For example, Leach and Preston (1999, 213) approvingly cited Watson (1996) as stating that ‘comparative education is usually regarded as predominantly theoretical and research-based, whereas international education makes practical use of comparative data’.

However, these understandings have not been consistent in all settings. Postlethwaite (1988), for example, had a somewhat different view and added a gloss on the decision of the CES to become the CIES:

Strictly speaking, to ‘compare’ means to examine two or more entities by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or among them. In the field of education, this can apply both to comparisons between and comparisons within education systems. In addition, however, there are many studies that are not comparative in the strict sense of the word which have traditionally been classified under the heading of comparative education. Such studies do not compare, but rather describe, analyse or make proposals for a particular aspect of education in one country other than the author’s own country. The Comparative and International Education Society introduced the word ‘international’ in their title in order to cover these sorts of studies. (Postlethwaite 1988, xvii)

Further diversity of interpretations is evident even within single issues of *Compare*. For example, Planel began with remarks about plurality in the field of comparative education and then presented her interpretation of the focus of international education:

Comparative education has lacked unity not only because it has embraced several disciplines but also because it has included two research traditions. The first is associated with the positivist tradition of measurement of education in order to inform policy. The second is set in the interpretivist frame, context was all important and the impact on policy was less important. Also, the term comparative education retained a flavour of education in developed countries, whereas the term international education suggested education in a more global context…. [C]omparative education is now more commonly known as comparative and international education in order to bring together the different traditions, aims and foci. (Planel 2008, 389)

Yet just a few pages later, Bunnell (2008, 415) proclaimed that ‘International education involves a dichotomy of study between the largely theoretical discipline of comparative education, and the still relatively under-researched body of international schools’.

Other authors refer to the field of comparative and international education rather than to separate fields of comparative education and international education. In the pages of *Compare*, among the most coherent presentations was that by Crossley (1999), who described comparative and international education as ‘a vibrant multidisciplinary field that is attracting increased attention from researchers and policymakers world-wide’ (250). He stressed the value of links between theoretical knowledge from the traditions of comparative education and applied research from the
traditions of international education, and argued for reconceptualisation to take account of ‘the socio-economic transformations, intellectual shifts and research priorities characteristic of the emergent twenty-first century’ (251). Less incisive in their characterisations of the field were Vulliamy (2004), Davies (2005) and Odora Hoppers (2009). Although Davies had the phrase ‘comparative and international education’ in the title of her article, the text led to a concluding section entitled ‘Agendas for comparative education research’ (2005, 368–70), omitting mention of ‘international’. Vulliamy (2004) and Odora Hoppers (2009) also wrote articles with the phrase ‘comparative and international education’ in their titles, but did not clearly delineate the nature of the field as they perceived it.

For completeness, it is pertinent to note that a few authors refer to the field of international and comparative education, that is, in a different order of words. One such author is McGrath (2001), writing for the *International Journal of Educational Development* (that is, a journal without ‘Comparative’ in its title). Presumably not by chance, the first part of his article focused on education in less developed countries and the work of such agencies as the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK government. Yet, commencing a section entitled ‘The challenge facing international and comparative education’, McGrath observed that:

> The very use in the title of this paper of the term ‘international and comparative education’ points to part of the problem of the sub-discipline. Whilst Watson (1998) shows the origins of comparative education and international education, it is evident that the reality is one of blurred distinctions with international and comparative education being a convenient coalition of interests. (2001, 397)

Referring back to widespread perceptions, McGrath stated (397) that ‘Comparative has often been seen as referring to work on OECD countries, with international covering other regions’; and added that another way of viewing the distinction ‘is between the more theoretical considerations of comparativism and the more applied concerns of internationalists’. His article then showed ways in which British universities were responding to economic pressures and to globalisation, which combined to make such distinctions archaic. McGrath concluded (399) by stressing the need for ‘rigorous analysis of the political economy of international and comparative education as a disciplinary area’, but himself realised that his study ‘raises more questions than it provides answers’.

**Policy statements in Compare**

Against this background, it is instructive to note explicit policy statements in the journal. Particularly during the period when *Compare* was the journal of a society which stressed only comparative education, one might have expected the fine print in the policy statements to have matched the title. However, it did not always do so closely. Thus, the editor of the first issue to be published in what became the journal’s established format with its familiar cover commenced (Boucher 1977, 1) by expressing pleasure that *Compare* had joined ‘the impressive list of journals published by Carfax’ and stressing that it remained the journal of the British Section of CESE. He stated that the journal sought to serve the needs of teachers of comparative education, but then, introducing ambiguity, indicated that a formal Advisory Editorial Board was being established consisting of well-known persons ‘in the field of international education’. The declaration of aims and scope on the inside cover (*Compare*, Vol. 7,
No.1, 1977) indicated that the journal saw itself as having an international focus, thereby apparently excluding intra-national comparisons. It stated that:

This international journal seeks to serve the needs of teachers of comparative education throughout the world by providing up-to-date information not readily available elsewhere, and by promoting discussion of practical problems and issues in the teaching and learning of comparative studies. Compare accepts articles from workers in all related fields of study from anywhere in the world, and is particularly interested in material which helps the teacher of comparative education in his or her daily work, is accurate, readable, informative, and complementary to papers in other comparative journals. The journal is published under the auspices of the British Section of the Comparative Education Society in Europe.

In 1981, this editorial statement was revised. Research workers were added along-side teachers as the primary audience, and despite the fact that the journal was still sponsored by a Comparative Education Society (as opposed to a Comparative and International Education Society), the word international was added alongside comparative. At the same time, the role of comparison was strengthened in an explicit call for papers ‘which seek to compare educational phenomena in two or more countries’. Thus, the statement became (Compare, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1981):

This international journal seeks to serve the needs of teachers and research workers in comparative and international education and related areas of study. Compare is interested in contributions which provide up-to-date information, analysis and discussion of educational policies, processes and structures and their relationships with the political, social and economic context; articles which promote discussion of pedagogy and papers concerned with research methods and recent research findings. It is particularly interested in papers which seek to compare educational phenomena in two or more countries and papers which have a theoretical focus. Compare is the official journal of the British Comparative Education Society.

This statement was retained in 1984 when BCES became BCIES, the only amendment being in the last sentence so that it described Compare as the official journal of the British Comparative and International Education Society. Perhaps also surprising is that the title of the Editorial for this first issue under the Society’s new name still focused only on comparative education. It was entitled ‘Comparative Education: Its Condition and a Future’ (Raggatt 1984), and commenced with a lament about a perceived loss of status and interest in the field of comparative education. The author did then move to international education in the second half of his Editorial – but evidently saw that field from the perspective of comparative education. He asserted that two lines of development needed to be fostered. The first (Raggatt 1984, 4) was ‘to accept that international studies of education are not the exclusive domain of comparativists’, and indeed that it was ‘a contemporary paradox that the recent decline in comparative education has been accompanied by an increase in the international study of education’. The Editor continued:

The overlap of interests with colleagues in development education is perhaps the most obvious example but many others become involved in some aspect of cross-national study. These colleagues offer insights from their own disciplines. They should be welcomed and accepted. Comparativists should learn from such insights and from the different methodologies that they employ, from the judgements made and from the conclusions drawn. The first step then is for comparativists to stop talking only to themselves and to start talking with their colleagues.
The focus was thus on the (undefined) field of development education, and the author omitted mention of ways in which specialists in international education might view their colleagues who specialised in comparative education.

Continuing the chronology, the next evolution in official aims and scope appeared in 2002. Evidently the mood had shifted substantially since 1984, and the new statement had a very different tone (Compare, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2002):

Comparative and international studies in education enjoy new popularity. They illuminate the effects of globalisation and post-structural thinking on learning for professional and personal lives. Compare publishes such research as it relates to educational development and change in different parts of the world. It seeks analyses of educational discourse, policy and practice across disciplines, and their implications for teaching, learning and management. The editors welcome papers which reflect on practice from early childhood to the end of adult life, review processes of comparative and international enquiry and report on empirical studies. Case studies of under-researched aspects of the field and countries about which little is known are of particular interest. All articles are reviewed to ensure their international relevance, a high quality of research and non-discriminatory language. Compare is the official journal of the British Association for International and Comparative Education.

This statement evidently had durability, since it remained in force in 2009 when the full title of the journal became Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education.

A Wider Framework

The names and emphases both of comparative education societies around the world and of their journals can usefully be compared within the framework of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), of which BAICE is a member. Like Compare, the origins of the WCCES date from 1968 when Joseph Katz of Canada’s University of British Columbia convened an International Committee of Comparative Education (Bray, Manzon, and Masemann 2007, 4). In 1970 this body convened the First World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, during which the WCCES was formed as an umbrella body for national and regional comparative education societies. The five founding member societies were the:

- Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) of the USA;
- Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE);
- Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES);
- Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC); and
- Korean Comparative Education Society (KCES).

Two of these bodies had International in their names, but three did not. Forty years later, the WCCES had 37 members among which only six had International in their names. Three were the original two societies (CIES and CIESC) plus BAICE. The other three were the:

- Sektion International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (SIIVEDGE);
- Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES); and
- Nordic Comparative and International Education Society (NOCIES).
Of these three, only NOCIES had the word International in its title at the outset. SIIVEDGE added the word International along with Intercultural in 1998; and ANZCIES incorporated the word International when in 1975 it evolved from the Australian Comparative Education Society (ACES) to the Australian and International Comparative Education Society (AICES) before becoming the Australian Comparative and International Education Society (ACIES) and finally the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society (ANZCIES) (Manzon and Bray 2007, 348–50).

The fact that SIIVEDGE has Intercultural in its name deserves note in so far as it demonstrates that if Comparative has to be paired with anything it is not necessarily only with International. One WCCES member society had History in its title alongside Comparative, and another had Educational Administration.

At the same time, other societies have considered and rejected the inclusion of International in their names. One is the Sociedad Española de Educación Comparada (SEEC), in which the proposal was made in 1984 but did not gain sufficient momentum (Naya and Ferrer 2007, 219). Another is the Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES), where the proposal was made in the mid-1990s but stalled because of awareness of potential confusion and overlap with the Japan International Education Society (JIES) (Ninomiya 2007, 137).

Further complexities are evident from the fact that, as with the CIES and with the BCIES/BAICE prior to 2009, the emphasis in the titles of the societies’ journals do not always match those of the societies themselves. Thus the journal of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC) is Canadian and International Education – omitting mention of comparison. By contrast, the journal of the Greek Comparative Education Society (GCES) includes the word international as the Comparative and International Education Review.

These points suggest that there is much ambiguity worldwide. In part, the popularity of pairing comparative and international education (and in that order) can be attributed to the leadership and demonstration effect of the US-based CIES. This society is not only the oldest, but is also the largest. It has major influence on communities beyond the USA, especially in the anglophone world.

**How much does it matter (and to whom)?**

Many members of BAICE, and of BCIES before it, if they are aware at all of the range of possible distinctions between comparative and international education, consider them to be of little importance. A similar remark applies to authors in Compare, many of whom are not even members of BAICE (but arguably should be). To many of these authors the distinctions would only be relevant if it were strongly pertinent to their goals, of which probably the most dominant in this context is to publish an article in a reputable journal and thereby achieve corresponding recognition from peers and from current and/or prospective future employers.

The editors of the journal may also feel that the distinctions do not greatly matter so long as they have a steady flow of high quality manuscripts which fit under an accommodating umbrella and attract sufficient readership and thereby both prestige and royalty payments to the sponsoring Association. The flow of manuscripts is indeed evident, and has allowed the journal to expand the number of issues each year. After a somewhat ragged start, two issues of the journal were published each year between 1972 and 1992. In 1993 the journal moved to three issues a year, in 2003 to
four issues a year, in 2007 to five issues a year, and in 2009 to six issues a year. Each of these issues had the full standard length, and the progression thus represented a significant growth in quantity of output. And while qualitative indicators are less easy to present, there would be strong grounds for asserting that the overall quality remained consistently high.

Nevertheless, a case may still be made for greater clarity about the nature of each of the twin fields – or, if this view is held, the fused field of comparative and international education – which the journal represents and to some extent defines. Despite the notion that, on at least one definition, international educators are practitioners who are likely to make use of comparative data (Leach and Preston 1999, 213), Compare is primarily an academic journal read by academics. As such, its prestige is determined in the academic arena, and by the sorts of criteria indicated by Becher and Trowler (2001) and Lawn and Furlong (2009). Among these criteria are clarity in identity and conceptualisation. As noted by Broadfoot in Compare, even the reputation of comparative education is shaky. Broadfoot remarked (1999, 225) that the diversity of methodologies ‘might reasonably prompt outsiders to ask whether comparative education studies do indeed have a distinctive contribution to make or whether they are merely a “pot pourri” of topics linked only by the variety of their national settings’. A similar remark could be made about the field of international education – and to the common overlapping area which might be described as the fused field of comparative and international education.

Conclusions
This paper has shown that the ambiguities surrounding and evidenced by Compare have a long history. A survey of the first 40 volumes of the journal seems to show longstanding lack of clarity in the boundaries of the field(s) that the journal has served and shaped. As remarked, although the journal until 2009 was subtitled only A Journal of Comparative Education, it published a considerable number of papers which could be described as fitting in one of more of the fields of international education. This possibility seemed to have been heralded from the very start of the journal in the standardised format that it assumed in 1977. Between 1981 and 2001 the statement of aims and scope indicated that the journal was ‘particularly interested in papers which seek to compare educational phenomena in two or more countries and papers which have a theoretical focus’, but it accepted many other types of papers.

Planel (2008, 389) stated that ‘the term comparative education retained a flavour of education in developed countries’. This view could be challenged. Presumably it meant comparative education as presented by specialists in the UK who identified themselves with that label, rather than comparative education as a whole, globally and/or in different parts of the world. Certainly the description would not fit the dominant emphases of scholars in the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES), for example; and even in the UK it was of doubtful validity, whatever the heritage of CESE. This observation stresses the need for scholars in the field to have broader horizons – and it is particularly ironic, perhaps, that this point needs to be made with reference to a group who think of themselves as already having broad horizons. At the same time, it is questionable whether Planel appropriately characterised international education as a field that ‘suggested education in a more global context’ (Planel 2008, 389). A considerable amount of excellent scholarship under the heading of comparative education also highlights global contexts, including focus on
the impact of globalisation on education systems and processes in different parts of the world.

This article has also shown the value of an historical approach which shows changes and continuities over time. Watson (1998, 12) highlighted the importance of awareness and understanding of past debates, events and patterns. He cited Jameson, who had lamented:

the disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve. (Jameson 1988, 29)

Lawn and Furlong made a similar statement about the broader field of educational studies:

Journals arrive without a past, reflecting (often creatively) new areas of work and old journals linger on, supplied by the necessity of research audit publication….Without conversing with the past, and recognising how it was populated, can we recognise our disciplinary responsibilities before we can decide to reject or develop them? (Lawn and Furlong 2009, 550)

Specifically in the domain of the comparative studies of education, Watson (1998, 12) made a powerful case for contemporary students to be informed about earlier debates. Elaborating in a subsequent issue of Compare, Watson (1999, 234) observed that ‘despite the growth in the number of papers in comparative education journals, there is a remarkable absence of theory, even awareness of the debates about comparative methodology that raged in the 1960s and 1970s’. One reason, he suggested, was that ‘while many of those writing about educational developments and projects are doing so as a spin off from consultancy work, they have had little, or no, formal training in the dangers and pitfalls of undertaking comparative studies’. For Compare, the types of publications to which Watson referred would presumably be included in the category of international education. Although Watson had been a strong advocate of the institutional alliance between international and comparative education (see Watson and King 1991; Watson 1996, 1998), he evidently retained some ambivalence about the matter.

In turn, this suggests that if indeed comparative education and international education are twin fields, then comparative education is the stronger of the twins. Although BAICE places International before Comparative in its name, this perhaps reflected the desire to have an acronym that can easily be pronounced more than a view on the relative importance of the twin fields. In practice, comparative education seems to remain dominant, at least at the level of conceptualisation and academic contribution. The ordering of comparative and international education in the CIES was not by chance, and the popularity of that ordering in the names of other societies probably reflects views on the relative strength of the twin fields as well as the demonstration effect of the CIES. In Compare also, the comparative twin seems stronger. Even the 1999 issue which brought papers from the inaugural BAICE conference and explicitly commented on the respective natures, roles and combinations of comparative and international education was at a conceptual level dominated by comparative education (Broadfoot 1999; Higginson 1999; Sweeting 1999; Watson 1999), leaving international education in the shadows.2 This may not have reflected the balances in the
inaugural BAICE conference, which did have a significant number of contributions that would have been classified as international education. Crossley’s paper fitted more boldly into the new vision, and, based on his keynote address at the inaugural conference, was entitled ‘Reconceptualising Comparative and International Education’ (Crossley 1999). It stressed the value of ‘strengthening linkages between the predominantly action-oriented, applied, international constituency of the field, and the more traditionally theoretical, comparative dimension’ (258). Yet Watson’s parallel paper focused only on comparative education research while asserting the need for reconceptualisation and fresh insights (Watson, 1999).

Readers of Compare have thus been served a great deal of ambiguity over the decades. A journal which has explicitly described itself as being in the field of comparative education has published many articles which would normally be described as fitting one or more conceptions of international education; and even the field of comparative education as exemplified by the journal has privileged cross-national comparisons and largely ignored the possibilities of meaningful intra-national comparisons.

Nevertheless, as an established journal in the twin and possibly combined fields of comparative and international education, Compare has made great contributions over the decades. Its solid trunk has developed impressive branches, and the fact that in 2009 the journal moved to six full issues per year showed the ongoing validity of the statement placed at the masthead in 2002 that ‘Comparative and international studies in education enjoy new popularity’. Looking to the future, the editors may choose to maintain the ambiguities and to accept articles more or less on their own merits as items of scholarly writing. Alternatively, they may choose to shape the journal somewhat more explicitly. In doing so, they might define what is and is not within the bounds of comparative education, international education, and comparative and international education. If they were able to do this successfully, it seems likely that the conceptual basis of the field would be strengthened, the academic prestige of the journal would be enhanced, and the academic community served by the journal would benefit.

Notes
1. As mentioned above, the journal commenced life as a newsletter. When it was formalised as a journal, the previous issues of the newsletter were grouped somewhat arbitrarily into volumes. Volume 1 was deemed to embrace one newsletter from 1968 and two from 1969; and Volume 2 was deemed to embrace one newsletter from 1969, two from 1970, and one from 1971. The contents of these volumes were listed in a complete index for the first seven volumes at the end of Volume 7, Number 2, 1977.
2. One article (Lowe 1999) by implication referred to one definition of international education in so far as it focused on international examinations organised by such bodies as the International Baccalaureate Organization, but was in fact a comparative study of experiences in El Salvador, Sudan, Jordan, Thailand and Argentina.
3. Further, Watson’s book (2001), which reprinted the papers from this issue of Compare and supplemented them with other papers from the conference and elsewhere, was called Doing Comparative Education Research rather than Doing Comparative and International Education Research.

References

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