

# Changing Times, Changing Territories: Reflections on CERC and the Field of Comparative Education

Editor: Maria Manzon

Authors: Lee Wing On, Mark Bray, Bob Adamson,  
Mark Mason, Yang Rui



Comparative Education Research Centre  
The University of Hong Kong



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## Abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BAICE	British Association for International and Comparative Education
BNU	Beijing Normal University
CCRRIE	Centre for Comparative Research in Regional and International Education
CE	Comparative Education
CERC	Comparative Education Research Centre
CESA	Comparative Education Society of Asia
CESE	Comparative Education Society in Europe
CESHK	Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong
CGSED	Comparative and Global Studies in Education and Development
CHER	Community for Higher Education Research
CIED	Comparative and International Education and Development
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
CRCSE	Centre for Regional and Comparative Studies in Education
CREC	Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China
CUHK	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	Education for All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GRF	General Research Fund (Hong Kong Research Grants Council)
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
KE	Knowledge Exchange
MEd	Master of Education
NIE	National Institute of Education [Singapore]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDF	Postdoctoral Fellow
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education

PGDE	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
PIRLS	Progress in Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RGC	Research Grants Council
SACHES	Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society
SIG	Special Interest Group
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Study
UKFIET	United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCCES	World Council of Comparative Education Societies

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Special mention goes to Emily Mang, former CERC Secretary, who showed her kindness to the Centre with her energetic, efficient and creative collaboration by devoting her personal time to assist in the production of this book. Sincere thanks also go to Zhang Wei, CERC's current Secretary, for her warm hospitality and cheerful assistance during my brief working week in CERC, and to Rifhan Miller, my loyal and diligent Research Assistant, who helped immensely in copyediting the final manuscripts.

Finally, my sincere appreciation goes to the authors in this book: Lee Wing On, Mark Bray, Bob Adamson, Mark Mason, and Yang Rui. They have been the most collaborative and most professional authors I have worked with. Having held the reins of CERC as its Directors, they have embodied CERC's tradition of high standards of scholarship and editorship. It has thus been a great pleasure to work with them in this endeavour.

## *Foreword*

I am delighted to provide some introductory words for this Monograph on the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). The Monograph has been prepared to mark CERC's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary; and it happens that that event coincides with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Faculty of Education.

Readers will find in the Monograph information on the 'pre-history' of CERC. The Faculty also has a pre-history, with origins in the Department for the Training of Teachers established in the Faculty of Arts in 1917. After various changes over the decades, this body became a School of Education in 1976 and a Faculty of Education in 1984.

At the outset, the Faculty was structured along Departmental lines. During the late 1980s the Faculty leadership discussed the value of Centres which would work across Departmental boundaries and would both highlight and support flagship areas of research. CERC was the first Centre to be formed, in 1994. Comparative Education was recognised to be a major strength in the Faculty's work, and CERC has indeed shown its value in maintaining and enhancing that strength. CERC has built a global reputation. It has attracted both young students and established scholars, and has contributed significantly to both local and international agendas.

This Monograph has been prepared in time for the annual conference of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK). The Faculty is proud to host the conference, and notes the synergies between CERC as a University body and the Society which attracts members from across tertiary institutions in Hong Kong and beyond. CERC has played a major leadership role in the CESHK, hosting its Secretariat at various times and with all five CERC Directors being at some time Presidents of the CESHK. The CESHK is a member of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in which CERC has also played a major role. CERC has been the Secretariat for the WCCES, and two CERC Directors have been Presidents of the WCCES.

In addition, the Faculty of Education hosts a UNESCO Chair in



Comparative Education. The Chair was awarded to HKU in 2012, in part because of the reputation of CERC. Again the Faculty is delighted to be able both to contribute to the global field and to benefit from the links that it brings.

This Monograph is more than just a collection of institutional recollections. Through the editorial leadership of Maria Manzon—one of our distinguished CERC alumni recognised for her major conceptual contributions to the field—the Monograph also has an analytical focus. As such, the Monograph makes a significant contribution to scholarship in its own right.

We are proud of CERC's contributions in and from the Faculty of Education, and we look forward to many further contributions in the decades ahead.

*Stephen Andrews*  
Dean, Faculty of Education  
The University of Hong Kong

# 1

## Introduction

*Maria MANZON*

This CERC monograph differs from others in the series in that it is not a research report but a commentary on a research institution: the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Established in 1994, CERC has accomplished over two decades of work. This monograph documents the trajectory of CERC as narrated by its five Directors.

Historically, the value of this book lies in encapsulating the collective efforts of its founders and their successors. It reflects on why CERC was formed and how the Centre's 'tribes and territories' (Becher & Trowler 2001) and their work have evolved over time. Sociologically, CERC as a unit for analysis provides an example of the institutionalisation of the field of comparative education. As Cowen (1990, p.322) contended, scholarly networks (journals, centres and societies) are important indicators of the "definition, demand, and supply of comparative education on a world basis". Viewed from a sociology-of-knowledge perspective, CERC exemplifies the dynamic interplay of international and domestic politics, episteme, personal biography and the internal sociology of universities. In this respect, this volume is entitled *Changing Times, Changing Territories: Reflections on CERC and the Field of Comparative Education*.

This introductory chapter will first explain the origin, aims and scope of the book. Second, it will give a brief introduction and overview of CERC to serve as a basic structure for the reflections that will follow in the subsequent chapters. Third, it will elucidate a conceptual framework, drawing on literature on academic tribes and territories, intellectual fields, and the logic of practice. Finally, it will outline the structure of the book.

## Origin, Aims and Scope of the Book

In 2004, CERC celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operation with an anniversary issue of *CERCular*, the Centre's newsletter. The issue celebrated CERC's achievements, recognising the contributions of its enthusiastic leaders and members, and the support of the University of Hong Kong and its Faculty of Education. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CERC coincided with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Faculty, as was recognised in a special lecture delivered by the then Dean of the Faculty (Bray 2004) within the context of the annual conference of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK).

A decade later, CERC marked its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary within the context of the Faculty of Education's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Both events were again celebrated within the annual conference of the CESHK in February 2015, with the theme 'Developing Scholarship in Comparative Education'. The CERC Management Committee felt that documenting the CERC story could provide material not only for local historical interest, but also for a substantive sociological reflection on the field of comparative education, in both its institutional and intellectual construction (Manzon 2011). These are the *raisons d'être* of this book.



The four Directors marking CERC's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
(L-R: Bob Adamson, Mark Bray, Lee Wing On, Mark Mason)

In September 2014, Mark Bray, contacted me in his role as Director of CERC with a preliminary proposal for this monograph and my editorial role in the project.<sup>1</sup> Soon after, the past CERC Directors were contacted and all expressed strong enthusiasm. The idea was to solicit short reflections from CERC's five Directors to date. The following questions guided their narratives:

- Through what route did you come to identify with the field of comparative education?
- What is your view of the way that CERC has developed during the last two decades?
- CERC is a Centre within a Faculty within a University. How do you feel that CERC has fitted into this picture, and what role has it played in academic knowledge production in the field of comparative education?
- Turning from the past to the future, what directions do you foresee and recommend?

In addition to the individual reflections written by the Directors, I obtained and verified information on the Centre's history and development through checking of minutes of meetings, *CERCular*, and consultation with the Directors by electronic mail and/or face-to-face. While the narratives include historical information, this book is not meant to be a (or the) history of CERC. Rather, it paints in broad brushstrokes the interplay of personal, institutional, and global-local structures, which in turn shaped this research centre in East Asia. The commentary may contribute to analysis in the field on the role of research centres in the institutional and intellectual construction of the field of comparative education. This literature focuses on the infrastructures of comparative education (Cowen 1990; Epstein 2013),

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<sup>1</sup> My long association with CERC has been helpful in this role. As a student in the HKU MEd programme in Comparative Education, I was introduced to and educated in comparative education through CERC. My dissertation was published as No.3 in CERC's Monograph series (Manzon 2004). I then proceeded to a PhD in HKU, focusing on the nature of the field (Manzon 2011). I now work at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore, and retain formal links with CERC as an Associate Member. Yet although these give me insights as an insider, I also have detachment as an outsider. My scholarly work on the institutionalisation of comparative education also provides a useful lens for this book.

including professional societies (Masemann, Bray & Manzon 2007), and university programmes (Wolhuter et al. 2013). The narratives will be analysed using sociological lenses to elucidate the dynamics of the institutionalisation of the field of comparative education.

## Brief Introduction to CERC

The Comparative Education Research Centre was established at the University of Hong Kong in 1994 as the first research centre of the Faculty of Education (see Lee Wing On's chapter for details). The Centre started with 36 self-nominated members in October 1994. The founding members of the Executive Committee were all staff from the Departments of Curriculum Studies and Education (CERC 2004, p.2). Since then, students have also joined the Committee.

CERC builds on the Faculty's considerable expertise in comparative studies in education, with the following aims:

- to facilitate, participate in and initiate a wide range of research projects with comparative perspectives;
- to support comparative research in education, and to disseminate information throughout the region and further afield through publications, newsletters, research activities, including seminars, symposiums, conferences, etc.;
- to establish and maintain a wide range of contacts with educational researchers and research institutions in China, in the region and internationally;
- to provide a centre upon which institutions and organisations within the region can draw for human and other resources for contract research, consultancies, and training in research methods (CERC 2015).

In line with these aims, CERC's achievements during its two decades of existence are noteworthy.<sup>2</sup> As at January 2015, they include:

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<sup>2</sup> CERC's operations underwent formal review as part of the Faculty's management processes in 1998, 2003 and 2010, and each time CERC was praised by both internal and external assessors (see e.g. CERC 2003; 2010). Numerous testimonies can also be cited from the international scholarly community (see e.g. remarks recorded in *CERCular* and in multiple reviews of CERC books).

- 54 book-length publications under the CERC imprint in English, of which 31 titles are in the CERC Studies in Comparative Education series (now co-published with Springer), and 11 are in the CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and International Education and Development;
- 18 translations of book-length publications into 13 languages;<sup>3</sup>
- 27 issues of *CERCular*, the Centre's newsletter;
- 245 seminars;
- 22 symposia and conferences; and
- 32 major projects, many of which have received GRF [General Research Fund from the Hong Kong Research Grants Council] and other external funding.

These robust achievements are even more remarkable considering that CERC's operation depends on voluntary support from its Management Committee and other members. The Management Committee consists of an ex-officio member, three elected members, and up to three co-opted members. The co-opted members can be either full members or associate members. Staff and students within the University are full members. Associate members come from outside the University, and their membership is by invitation from the Management Committee. As at January 2015, CERC had 144 full members (44 staff, 100 students) from seven faculties and institutions in HKU, and 18 associate members from 10 countries. Table 1 lists CERC's Directors and Secretaries since its inception.



Passing the baton as CERC's Secretary (L-R: Emily Mang, Zhang Wei)

<sup>3</sup> These include Chinese, Farsi, French, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Mongolian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

**Table 1: CERC Directors and Secretaries**

<i>Director</i>		<i>Secretary</i>	
Lee Wing On	1994 -1996	Carmel Wong	1994-1995
Mark Bray	1996-2001	Michelle Fong	1995-1997
Bob Adamson	2002	Emily Mang	1997-2014
Mark Mason	2002-2008	Zhang Wei	2014-present
Yang Rui	2008-2010		
Mark Bray	2010-present		

The Management Committee has led the effort to develop links with other comparative education centres. Several members participated in various IEA studies, including the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Civic Education Study. CERC's members have also conducted research studies for international organisations including UNESCO, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank. CERC likewise has strong links with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), and other professional societies, as the following chapters elucidate.

## Conceptual Framework

This book draws on two sociological explanations—which are seemingly unrelated (because they do not cite each other) but which are arguably interrelated—in order to elucidate the dynamics of the construction of the field of comparative education, taking a research centre as the unit for analysis. They are: the intellectual field (Bourdieu 1969) and academic tribes and territories (Becher & Trowler 2001).<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu's intellectual field theory offers a structural explanatory framework for understanding the dynamic processes of knowledge formation in interaction with powers (in the plural). In a different disciplinary tradition from Bourdieu, Becher and Trowler offered a sociologically grounded analysis of a broad range of academic disciplines and their fragmentation as a result of the interaction between

<sup>4</sup> These were used as the explanatory framework for a study of the institutionalisation of comparative education in the Asia-Pacific region (Bray & Manzoni 2014). Some of the ideas employed here are extracts from that article.

academics (tribes) and the ideas (territories) with which they work.

### *Intellectual Field*

Bourdieu's theory on the intellectual field (1969) can be understood within his broader explanation of the logic of practice. He argued that any social practice is a result of a triadic interaction among *habitus*, *capital* and *field* (Bourdieu 1984a, p.101), as distilled in the following formula:

$$\{(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})\} + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

Any social practice, including scholarly practice, is shaped by an individual's possession of habitus/disposition and various forms of capital/resources, which determine the individual's position within a particular social space/field. *Habitus* refers to "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" which serve as principles which generate and organise practices (Bourdieu 1990, p.53). *Habitus* is the result of a long process of inculcation and inclines agents to behave rather instinctively in specific situations. By *capital*, Bourdieu (1986) distinguished among economic, cultural, and social capital. Economic capital refers to material resources such as income and property, while cultural capital refers to forms of cultural knowledge, competences (including linguistic, entrepreneurial, etc.) or dispositions, and their institutionalisation in the form of degrees, titles, and credentials. Social capital alludes to social networks and connections. Agents occupy positions in the field depending on the volume of the relevant form(s) of capital they possess. Their positions can change due to human interaction, collaboration or competition, and human autonomy. The *field* is thus a structured space of objective social forces and struggles among actors over specific resources and access to them. Each field has its own rules and observed hierarchy of acceptable currencies of capital.

More specifically, Bourdieu (1969, p.89) conceived the *intellectual field* as "like a magnetic field, made up of a system of power lines". The constituting agents (individuals) or systems of agents (institutions) may be described as "so many forces which by their existence, opposition or combination", determine the specific structure of the intellectual field at a given moment in time. The field is thus dynamically constructed by the interactions of occupants within a "system of positions and oppositions" (1969, p.109). Such interactions



among agents may be explained by the dynamic law of the quest for distinction (Bourdieu 1984b, p.10). Under this prism, intellectual interests and products—theories, methods, teaching, research, publications—that appear to be disinterested contributions to knowledge can also be viewed as political strategies by agents to establish, restore, reinforce, protect or reverse structures of relations of symbolic domination. Actors compete with each other for the socially recognised capacity to speak and act legitimately in the production of scholarly goods and the consequent command over resources for the production of more scientific goods (Lenoir 1993, pp.76-77). Thus, in the intellectual field the political struggle to dominate resources and gain recognition is inseparable from the struggle to legitimate cognitive power to define the domains of the intellectual field (Bourdieu 1975). This critique of intellectual practices and institutions views them as struggles for symbolic power—the capacity to name, categorise, and define legitimate forms of knowledge production (Delanty 2001). The law of the search for distinction suggests that conflict between intellectuals will be especially intense for those holding neighbouring positions in the field (Bourdieu 1984b, p.30).

Transposing this to the social practice of comparative education, its forms of practice would vary depending on an agent's ideology or philosophy of comparative education (*habitus*) and different forms and levels of cultural, economic and social capital (as well as symbolic capital) within a particular social field (e.g. university, professional society, research centre, national, regional, international). By 'agent' I refer here to individuals, i.e. academics working in the field, but they could also be extended in other analyses to education policymakers, school teachers, and students (i.e. graduate students). Agents could also be institutions (e.g. research centres, professional societies, inter-governmental agencies, etc.).

The abovementioned theoretical considerations echo Cowen's sociology of knowledge perspective on the institutionalisation of comparative education as shaped by the interplay of personal biography, the internal sociology of universities, and the national political work agenda vis-à-vis the geopolitical and domestic contexts (Cowen 1982; 2000; 2009). Thus, as I have argued elsewhere (Manzon 2011, p.212):

the academic definitions of the field represent the *quasi-discursive intellectual construction* of comparative education by individual

academics who, through scholarly discourse, codify the relations of power between the external social structures within which they work (from international, national down to the local university), the various forms of capital they hold and the intellectual traditions and criteria that govern their intellectual field.

### *Academic Tribes and Territories*

Becher and Trowler (2001, p.23) contended that an academic discipline is the result of a mutually dependent interplay of the structural force of the epistemological character of disciplines that conditions culture, and the capacity of individuals and groups as agents of autonomous action, including interpretive acts. Each disciplinary grouping thus displays distinctive epistemological and sociological features. In this respect, the authors used the term 'tribes' to refer to academic communities that were defined partly by the members of those communities and partly by universities which placed them in faculties, departments, centres or other units (*sociological*). The 'territories' were the disciplinary knowledge characteristics, i.e. the ideas on which the academics focused, including subject matter, methods, and modes of discourse (*epistemological*). Academic territories are thus concerned with intellectual substance and truth claims, while academic tribes incarnate that intellectual substance into social and political institutions.

With respect to this sociological dimension, disciplinary institutionalisation is not limited to its formal recognition and location within the academic structure of a department or faculty. It also includes the formation of scholarly societies, research centres and other forms of academic networking such as journals and conferences. It embraces 'invisible colleges', which Crane (1972) conceptualised as communication networks of scholars linking separate groups of collaborators within research areas. These invisible colleges, Crane suggested (1972, pp.138-139):

help to unify areas and to provide coherence and direction to their fields. Their central figures and some of their associates are closely linked by direct ties and develop a kind of solidarity that is useful in building morale and maintaining motivation among members.

Research centres, scholarly societies and other social networks bring together communities of scholars and practitioners with common interests and identities, and further disseminate disciplinary knowledge. Clark (1987, p.233) observed that disciplinary associations in higher education have helped “tighten the hold of specialisation upon academic life, a device that would serve externally as a carrying mechanism for a discipline at large, a way of furthering specialties without regard to institutional boundaries”. Since education (and comparative education) is not considered to be a discipline, but rather “a field of study covering all the disciplines which serve to understand and explain education” (Khôi 1986, p.15), some specific considerations on fields of study are explored here.

Fields of study are unlike disciplines which usually take institutional shape in university departments and faculties. A field’s presence and importance are largely determined by the field’s relative visibility (Klein 1990). This may take two forms: the overt form of interdisciplinary institutions, such as a single umbrella organisation, and the less overt forms for interdisciplinary dialogue such as study groups, symposia, conferences, publications, and institutes.

More specifically for comparative education, Epstein (1981, p.270) commented that this interdisciplinary field is interstitial. This feature reaffirms the importance of scholarly networks, such as research centres, in playing a pivotal role in the development and visibility of the field. Cowen’s (1990, p.322) observation remains apposite:

[The] lack of clarity over what is the epistemological core and institutional centre of comparative education means that the networks of connection between the bits and pieces of comparative education take on extra importance. Changes in networks (of new centres, journals and societies) are one measure of what comparative education is, and one indication of the definition, demand, and supply of comparative education on a world basis.

In this perspective, this book moves forward scholarship on the institutionalisation of the field of comparative education by exploring CERC’s role as a leading research centre, both locally and internationally. The theoretical lenses explained here will help to interpret the reflections of CERC’s Directors which will unfold in the succeeding chapters, a discussion of which will follow in the concluding chapter of the book.

## Structure of the Book

After this introductory chapter, the six consecutive chapters that follow comprise the core of this book. CERC is an entity with an independent life from its leadership, but its Directors have played (and still play) a crucial role in vivifying, shaping and expanding its outreach and achievements. The six chapters contain the reflections of each of the Centre's Directors and are organised in chronological order of their terms of office. The narratives exhibit a strong continuity—as in an uninterrupted chain with each era building on the previous one—albeit different emphases given the different strengths and opportunities afforded in each period. This is what the cover design of this book aims to portray.

Lee Wing On, as the first Director (1994-1996), recalls the pre-history and foundational era of CERC. Mark Bray, his successor, elaborates on CERC's major growth within and beyond HKU for the period 1996 to 2001. Bob Adamson, despite his short term as Director, reports on continued enhancements in CERC's profile, especially in its publications. Under Mark Mason's directorship (2002-2008), CERC took a 'development turn', acquiring a more pronounced focus on international and education development. Yang Rui, who was Director from 2008 to 2010, introduces a fresh 'Chinese perspective' in his reflections on CERC's scholarship. Mark Bray, who assumed Directorship in 2010, further infused new energy and vision into CERC, forging new strategic partnerships and scholarship as he elaborates in his chapter. The concluding chapter aligns these reflective pieces with the scholarly literature on the dynamics of intellectual fields and their implications on the institutionalisation of the field of comparative education.

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## Pre-history and Foundational Years of CERC 1994 – 1996

*LEE Wing On*

### My Introduction to Comparative Education

My schooling and undergraduate education were all done in Hong Kong. I studied Chinese Language and Literature for a BA degree at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), and also trained to be a teacher at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Looking back, I still feel very privileged to have been admitted to read Chinese in an English-medium university, i.e. HKU. In addition to our teachers from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan, we were taught by professors trained in Western countries. This training at HKU was quite in contrast to the courses offered by the traditional Chinese departments in other universities in Hong Kong. I was exposed to Western scholarly works that analysed Chinese philosophy, history and literature. I discovered a new academic world, i.e. Sinology in the West, and admired the depth of the ways they analysed Chinese works, especially empirical analyses. Looking back my training in comparative education might have started in my undergraduate studies in the particular way that Chinese was taught at HKU.

I taught for seven years in a local secondary school, and then had the opportunity in 1984 to go to England for my doctoral studies. My real understanding of comparative education began in England. It was on the one hand experiential, through living in a different culture, and on the other hand academic, through the focus of my doctoral studies.

These doctoral studies were undertaken at the University of Durham under the supervision of Richard F. Goodings. He encouraged me to pursue a comparative study, and my first book (Lee 1991) was based on the thesis. It was entitled *Social Change and Educational Problems in Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong*. When I returned to



Hong Kong after my doctoral studies, I found that I was already transformed by the training in comparative education, as I viewed the local education system through a very different set of lenses as compared to those I acquired from my undergraduate studies. During the doctoral studies, the greatest finding was that, when I started to analyse Hong Kong in the light of comparing it with Japan and Singapore, I found that I almost did not know Hong Kong at all. It was quite a blow to me, for someone who had grown up and been educated there; but it was my first taste of the power of comparative education. I began to see the value of enhancing my understanding of my own society through the process of comparison and comparative perspectives.

Immediately after I returned from England, I taught for two years at the then Hong Kong Baptist College. I was subsequently fortunate to be appointed to a lectureship at HKU in 1990. Officially, my focus was on philosophy of education, but in practice I was able to include comparative education in my research and teaching agenda.

## **Establishment and Early Years of CERC**

The pre-history of the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong dates back to the 1980s. HKU's Faculty of Education played a key role in the cross-national studies of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA),<sup>1</sup> and the Faculty was formally designated the Hong Kong IEA Centre. The IEA work was initially undertaken by Alan Brimer and colleagues from the Faculty who participated in projects across a range of subjects including mathematics education (Brimer & Griffin 1985), science education (Holbrook 1990), and preschool education (Opper 1992). In 1987 John Biggs succeeded Brimer as head of the Hong Kong

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<sup>1</sup> The IEA is an independent, international cooperative of national research institutions and governmental research agencies. It conducts large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement and other aspects of education, with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education (IEA 2015). Among its more prominent comparative studies are TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study) and PIRLS (Progress in Reading Literacy Study). Hong Kong joined the IEA in 1977, and the Hong Kong IEA Centre was based initially in the HKU School of Education and then, when the School was split into Departments to form a Faculty, in the Department of Education.

IEA Centre, and I took over its directorship from 1995 to 1997. The comparative studies undertaken during this early period laid the foundation of what Sweeting (1999) has called the modern era of comparative education at HKU.

In 1989, John Biggs proposed a Centre for Regional and Comparative Studies in Education (CRCSE). The proposal was in principle supported by the Faculty of Education, and in January 1990 a letter hoping to secure some external funds was submitted to Sir Albert Rodrigues, Pro-Chancellor, signed by Paul Morris as Dean of the Faculty of Education and John Biggs as Head of the Department of Education. However, the seed did not germinate at that time.

At that period Mark Bray and I were teaching modules in comparative education in the Master of Education (MEd) programme. Mark Bray's expertise in comparative education was well known at the time he was recruited to the Faculty in 1987. We worked together and felt that we could become a strong force in the field of comparative education. For example, in 1992 we both for the first time attended a congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). It was held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, on the theme 'Education and Democracy'. We co-authored a paper (Bray & Lee 1993) that was selected for the special issue of the *International Review of Education* that emerged from the Congress and was later republished in a book edited by the WCCES Secretary-General, Raymond Ryba.

The idea of a Centre was revived in late 1992 when the Faculty's Academic Committee prepared a Ten-year Plan for the Faculty. By this time, Mark Bray was Head of the Department of Education. The establishment of the CRCSE was included in the Plan submitted to the Faculty Board at its January 1993 meeting for discussion. The Plan was adopted by the Faculty Board, but again action on the Centre was slow. Eventually, however, our perseverance bore fruit. The climate at the University level became favourable at the beginning of 1994, when the authorities distributed a document about Centres of Academic Activity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> HKU defined "Centres of Academic Activity" as virtual rather than real centres. They comprised groups of people from different departments within the University who had a common research interests. In the words of the document (HKU Circular 279/394, p.1): "A centre will by its nature be relatively fluid and ad hoc. A centre may engage in a variety of academic activities, for example, the production of a database of common facilities and interests, the joint supervision of research students, the conduct of seminars

These were to be virtual centres, requiring no additional resources but serving as pools for drawing existing research expertise together and attracting sponsorship and funding. In his role of Head of Department, Mark Bray reinvigorated the proposal at the Faculty Board in its April 1994 meeting. The Faculty Board formally endorsed the proposal, and sent it on to the Senate which approved it in May 1994. The last step was the University Council, which approved the proposal in June 1994.

The body was initially called Centre for Comparative Research in Regional and International Education (CCRRIE), i.e. slightly different from the CRCSE proposed in 1989. It still partly reflected the desire to incorporate the IEA work. As a 1993 document had explained: "It would be possible to continue our membership of IEA without a Centre, but it is a better use of resources if the matters of IEA, and of maintaining regionally focused educational research, were integrated into the one organisational structure". The CCRRIE organised its first seminar on 10 November 1994, presented by Gennady Bordovsky who was visiting from the Russian State Pedagogical University, with 15 attendants.

I was honoured and fortunate to be elected the Centre's first Director. The other members of the Executive Committee were Mark Bray and Keith Johnson. The Executive Committee further co-opted Cheng Kai-ming, Frederick Leung and Paul Morris. In October 1994 the Centre had 36 self-nominated members, 18 of whom were from the Department of Education, 14 from the Department of Curriculum Studies, and four from other parts of the University. Our first Executive Committee meeting was on 14 November 1994. In that meeting, we resolved to have a Centre logo designed, to publish a regular newsletter, and to organise an inaugural conference. For the conference, Mark Bray suggested the theme 'Education and Political Transition', which resonated with Hong Kong's climate leading up to the 1997 resumption of Chinese sovereignty. We also resolved to bid for CCRRIE'S first post-doctoral fellow in response to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's call for nominations. Zhang Weiyuan, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, became the Centre's first post-doctoral fellow in 1996. He was followed by Gui Qin from Capital Normal University in Beijing in

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on topics of common interest, and entering into cooperative agreements with similar groups elsewhere."

1997. It was gratifying to note the impact these scholars were able to make on young scholars in China through CERC.

I felt that the Centre needed a more generic name, and the initial months were spent on consultation, seeking views on how this new Centre could engage as many colleagues as possible. The outcome was the renaming of CCRRIE as the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) in March 1995.

This renaming was achieved in time for CERC's first General Meeting later that month. We also reported on the Centre's launch of two electronic bulletin boards, ComparEd and China Education, which focused on comparative education and education in China, respectively. The objective of these electronic forums was to allow convenient access for scholars and researchers to exchange and disseminate relevant information of various types such as conference announcements, job vacancies, and publications. This was early in the internet era, and CERC was taking a global lead. UNESCO and the US-based Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) introduced ComparEd in their 1995 newsletters. The CIES also encouraged its readers to use ComparEd to identify fellow panellists for its 1996 annual conference.

Among guiding principles for my period as Director were that we were not to establish a centre for a small group of people. Rather, we had established it for the whole Faculty of Education. With that in mind, I desired to manifest the comparative education research strength of the whole Faculty rather than just a few of us. This agenda drove us to circulate a list of relevant publications by Faculty members in *CERCular*, and this CERC newsletter was launched in February 1996. The theme of the inaugural issue, of which 1,000 copies were printed and distributed, was 'Comparative Studies in Education in the University of Hong Kong'. We looked for comparative elements in the publications of our Faculty colleagues, i.e., whether they were related to issues beyond Hong Kong, or whether they were looking at certain practices in other countries, or even undertaking an international review of a topic. We realised that many people were related to comparative education in one way or another.

*CERCular* was an effective medium to realise one of the aims of CERC, namely "to support comparative research in education, and to disseminate information throughout the region and further afield through publications, newsletters, research activities". *CERCular* was

an important vehicle not only for disseminating the works related to comparative education conducted by HKU colleagues, but also for soliciting interest from colleagues who submitted their publication information to us for inclusion. The newsletter in this respect provided a vehicle for self-selection in which colleagues could claim that their works were associated with comparative education. We maintained production of *CERCular* at two issues a year in English, and excerpts were reprinted in Chinese through the *Comparative Education Review* published by Beijing Normal University (BNU). This was a further partnership which both we and BNU valued.

As CERC Director, I launched the Inaugural International Symposium 29-31 May 1995. We organised this event partly to celebrate the establishment of CERC, and partly to announce CERC's existence to the world. Slightly broadening the theme that had initially been proposed by Mark Bray, we made it 'Education and Socio-political Transitions in Asia'. We invited international guest speakers, including Yoshio Gondo (Japan), Saravanan Gopinathan (Singapore), Andy Green (UK), Jürgen Henze (Germany), Molly Lee (Malaysia), Suresh Shukla (India), Wang Yingjie (People's Republic of China), and Young Yirong (Chinese-Taipei), as well as local speakers from HKU and elsewhere in



A panel of speakers at the CERC inaugural symposium  
[L-R: Jürgen Henze (Bochum, Germany), Andy Green (London, UK),  
Cheng Kai Ming (HKU), Mark Bray (HKU)]

Hong Kong. Over 100 people attended the symposium, which was organised in 12 panels entitled: Comparative Perspectives; Education and Development; Higher Education; Values in Transition; Equality Issues; Country and Regional Studies; Curriculum Issues; Education and Colonial Transitions; Comparative Education Studies; and Comparative Education Societies in Asia.

A second major symposium was held in December 1995 on 'Civic Education before and after 1997'. The symposium was jointly organised with the Hong Kong Institute for the Promotion of Chinese Culture and with Education Convergence in order to provide a forum for discussing issues of civic education in view of the political transition in 1997. The symposium attracted over 100 participants.

Another memorable experience was CERC's first book publication. Among the development plans discussed in CERC's first General Meeting was the publication of works on comparative studies in education. At that time, John Biggs and David Watkins had just completed their work on 'The Chinese Learner'. They asked if CERC would be interested in publishing their manuscript. That was the first time I had received a publication request, and I decided to take the challenge. The Chinese Learner is definitely a comparative work because it started with Biggs' discovery that certain traits among the Chinese learners in Hong Kong were quite different from his Australian subjects. He discovered that the learning styles or approaches of the Chinese learner did not concur with his paradigm of surface and deep learning. In contrast, a comparison of the academic performance of Chinese and Australian learners revealed that the Chinese learners excelled by not having gone through what was then understood as a deep learning process. That created the field of the Chinese Learner in cross-cultural psychology of learning. I am very proud to have made that decision to publish *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences* (Watkins & Biggs 1996), which became a seminal book in cross-cultural psychology.

My little contribution in this endeavour was to propose an informative subtitle. We spent much time formulating book titles, and the experience taught me the importance of titles in academic publishing. I also made a bold decision on book pricing. At that time, the average price of a scholarly paperback book was below HK\$100 (US\$13). I marked the price of this first book at HK\$150, which was quite brave, with the confidence that the book would still sell. Sur-

prisingly and excitingly, I recouped all the financial investments within one month. It was a huge success, and I had my first taste of the fruit of entrepreneurship in managing CERC publications. I estimated the demand for the new book, and I thought of how to generate income out of nothing. So I began to take on consultancy work from UNESCO and the Hong Kong government's Education Department in order to create some financial capacity for CERC to run. When I handed over CERC to Mark Bray in October 1996, I also passed on to him a healthy financial balance. The March 1996 report for the second Annual General Meeting recorded a balance of HK\$129,451. I also informed members of a possible profit for CERC of HK\$100,000 from a HK\$500,000 project that I took up funded by the Hong Kong government's Education Department for production of a video on civic education.

CERC's first book (Watkins & Biggs 1996) was co-published with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). At that time, John Biggs and I were discussing the best way to publish it. I really thank John Biggs and David Watkins for their trust in CERC. We discussed realistic issues, such as the fact that CERC was a new centre and unknown to the world. Thus, we decided that the first publication should be attached to a research centre which was already internationally known. John Biggs proposed to try ACER, so I approached them to see if they would be interested in co-publishing. They already knew John Biggs, and had confidence in him. We then came to a deal. My approach to ACER was along the lines: "We want to publish this book. Would you be able to take charge of the royalties of all the editors and chapter authors? I will then give you a thousand copies that you can sell in Australia." They then sent a representative to Hong Kong to sign a contract with me. That was the first time I signed a contract on behalf of the Centre. To me, it was a perfect solution because CERC was low on funding and we needed to pay our authors. ACER's generosity in taking the risk of publication was therefore a perfect help. We published 1,000 extra copies at a minimal printing cost, and the book sold very well in Hong Kong and internationally.

The Centre was also engaged in training and consultancy. In November 1995, CERC hosted a training programme for four school inspectors from Bhutan, sponsored by the Bhutanese Ministry of Health and Education and channelled through Mark Bray who was undertaking consultancy work in Bhutan for UNICEF. The delegates came to study the education system, the school inspection mechanism, and aspects of

educational provision in Hong Kong. The programme also included a series of special lectures in various areas by HKU Faculty colleagues and also included staff from other institutes (e.g. Philip Hoare from the Hong Kong Institute of Education).



The delegates from the Bhutanese Ministry of Health and Education with  
Lee Wing On and Mark Bray

In 1995 I obtained a large Research Grants Council (RGC) grant for the IEA Second Civic Education Study. I asked my research assistant, Michelle Fong, to be the CERC Secretary. Up to that time, the minutes of the Executive Committee had been taken by Carmel Wong, who was a member of the administrative team of the Department of Education. Michelle designed the CERC logo which remains as it is today. In 1997, under Mark Bray's directorship, Michelle was succeeded by Emily Mang as the second CERC Secretary for 17 years (see Chapter 3 on Mark Bray's reflections). Emily was also partly supported by my research grant for some years even after I had stepped down as CERC Director. This shows the worthwhile sacrifices that elected members have exerted to make the Centre work.

## **Embedded Role of CERC**

CERC is a Centre within the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong. It served the Faculty in its flexibility to explore its academic boundaries (as aforementioned), and it expanded the impact of the Faculty beyond the University locally and internationally.



For example, there has long been a close relationship between CERC and the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), which was established in 1989 (Wong & Fairbrother 2007). All the people running CERC have been active members of CESHK and together the two bodies have made comparative education in Hong Kong even stronger. During that time, I was a core member of CESHK, having assumed the roles of Secretary, Vice-President and then President (1996-98). The work of the CESHK became so intertwined with CERC that they seemed to be two sides of the same coin. The CESHK served as another venue to publicise CERC's work and secure support from the larger scholarly community in Hong Kong.

CERC also facilitated the formation of the Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA). Yoshio Gondo, a Japanese professor, was invited as a guest speaker to CERC's inaugural Symposium in 2005 as he was one of the leading forces behind establishing an Asian society. He sponsored a group of 10 scholars from different Asian countries. During the Symposium the CESA founding committee convened in a side meeting and agreed on the society's constitution. With this agreement, the CESA officers felt able to announce the establishment on CESA on 30 May 1995, i.e. the penultimate day of the Symposium (see Mochida 2007, p.310).

## **Conclusion**

The inaugural Directorship of CERC was an opportunity to learn about many aspects of organisational work beyond academic activities. These included strategic decision-making on publications, defining and redefining comparative education, undertaking publicity and promotion, and networking. It also involved entrepreneurship that required me to secure funds to run the Centre and keep it sustainable.

One aspect of work that was unforgettable was the submission of CERC's development plan in CERC's first General Meeting in March 1995. As CERC Director, I was required to think and plan ahead, and I thus submitted a development plan for CERC to be endorsed by the meeting. We were proud that these plans were realised, if not immediately then in the longer run. The CERC Series co-published first with Kluwer and later with Springer (following the acquisition of

Kluwer by Springer), and became a world renowned Comparative Education series.

Many other aspects of achievement brought about by my succeeding directors and their efforts have made CERC one of the most important centres of comparative education. Humbly, we are very grateful to the world community for giving us the opportunities to serve in a role that would shape the world agenda of comparative education.

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## Expanding within and beyond HKU 1996 – 2001

*Mark BRAY*

### **My Introduction to Comparative Education**

I entered the field through what would commonly be called international rather than comparative education, or possibly development studies (see e.g. Wilson 1994; Little 2000). During the early 1970s I was a volunteer teacher first in Kenya and then in Nigeria. I took every opportunity to travel not only within those countries but also around neighbours, and became much interested in development issues in Africa as a whole. Following two years of teaching in a rural Nigerian school, I joined the MSc programme in African Studies at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Within the programme, my core subjects were Economics (which built on my undergraduate degree) and Education (which fitted my more practical experience in Kenya and Nigeria). The Education strand was led by Kenneth King, who is now Emeritus Professor at the University of Edinburgh and has also played a role in CERC especially following his appointment at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in 2006. His leadership in the 1970s (and after) attracted me to the Education strand more strongly than to Economics.

The MSc study led to doctoral work, with my thesis later being published as a book about the Universal Primary Education scheme launched in Nigeria in 1976 (Bray 1981). I had conducted fieldwork for that thesis while teaching in a secondary school in Nigeria's Kano State. Subsequently I was fortunate to secure a dual appointment as a lecturer in the Centre of African Studies and the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Edinburgh, holding the reins for Kenneth King while he took leave for work based in Canada. This lasted for

three and a half years, following which I worked in Papua New Guinea for three years, and at the Institute of Education of the University of London for a year and a half. I joined HKU in 1986 with a fellowship in the Centre of Asian Studies.

During the period prior to joining HKU, most of my work was country-focused. For example, two books concerned Papua New Guinea, and most of my articles were nationally-focused on Nigeria, Papua New Guinea or other countries. However, I did co-author a book entitled *Education and Society in Africa* (Bray, Clarke & Stephens 1986) which was more comparative in a cross-national sense.

Move to Hong Kong of course brought new interests and opportunities. HKU has always been a good place to work from as well as in. The University's support for international work and academic freedom allowed me to develop interests in the economics and financing of education (e.g. Bray 1987, 1991; Bray with Lillis 1988), and small states (e.g. Bray 1992; Bray & Packer 1993). HKU has also always been generous with support to attend conferences. From 1987 I became a regular participant in the annual conferences of the US-based Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), and from 1992 in the triennial congresses of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). I was also from the outset a regular participant in the annual conferences of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), which had been established in 1989 (Wong & Fairbrother 2007, p.245).



CERC members in CIES, Buffalo, New York, 1998 (L-R: Paul Morris, Mark Bray, Zhang Lili, Au Yeung King Hau, and Ip Kin Yuen)

## **CERC Personnel and the MEd Programme**

Lee Wing On has written about the origins of CERC. I was part of the machinery, holding discussions with John Biggs, Paul Morris and others. From 1991 to 1995 I was Head of the HKU Department of Education, and in that role as well as a personal capacity as an elected member of the CERC Management Committee was glad to support Lee Wing On as CERC Director and help to advance the CERC mission.

In 1996 Lee Wing On moved to new roles, and I took over from him as the CERC Director for what turned out to be just over five years. In 2010 I again took up the Directorship, but that period is addressed in a later chapter.

As I saw it, the principal task for CERC during the second half of the 1990s was to expand to new horizons within and beyond HKU. The CERC office moved to the seventh floor of the Knowles Building with Michelle Fong as Secretary, though she did not stay long. I recall interviewing replacement candidates together with Lee Wing On in 1997. The obvious choice was a recent graduate in geography from the University of Victoria, Canada, called Emily Mang. What stood out for us most strongly was her preparation for the interview, which had included coming the day before to study the notice boards in order to find out what comparative education actually was. Emily stayed in CERC for 17 years, and became its backbone and in some respects its most consistent face.

From 1996 onwards, a new group within the CERC membership comprised the MEd students in the specialist stream for Comparative Education, launched in that year. It was a two-year part-time programme in the standard mode for MEd degrees at that time. The core modules were:

- Scope and Methodology in Comparative Education (Mark Bray),
- Comparative Studies of Curriculum Development and Reform (Paul Morris),
- Policy Analysis in Education: Comparative Perspectives (Cheng Kai Ming),
- The Economics and Financing of Education: Comparative Perspectives (Mark Bray and Wong Kam Cheung), and

- Social and Cultural Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives (Lee Wing On).

The cohort had 16 students, among whom most were Hong Kong citizens but one was from Japan and others from Taiwan and Scotland. The Japanese student, Tomoko Ako, came specifically for this course even though it was only offered on a part-time basis. Many people wanted to know why she had not followed the common pattern for Japanese students to go to Western countries such as the USA and England. She explained in *CERCular* (Ako 1996, p.4):

Since I am especially interested in Chinese education, I thought about going to China for my studies. Then I found that there were a lot of professors in the University of Hong Kong who were publishing interesting and high quality papers on both comparative education and Chinese education. Therefore, I chose Hong Kong. Although the course of Comparative Education in HKU has just started, it seems to me that the curricula are carefully designed covering theoretical and practical issues comprehensively.

Tomoko Ako joined the CERC Management Committee and brought a valuable student voice. She stayed for a PhD (Ako 2003), and her subsequent contributions included collaboration with two other alumni (Yoko Yamato and Mitsuko Maeda) in the Japanese translation of the CERC book *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007).

## CERC Publications

During this period a dominant topic in everybody's minds concerned the implications of Hong Kong's 1997 reversion to China. Lee Wing On and I had been invited to prepare two special issues of journals on the theme of education and political transition, one for the *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* and the other for *Comparative Education*. We sought permission to reprint them with revised covers, and they became the initial volumes in our series CERC Studies in Comparative Education (Lee & Bray 1997; Bray & Lee 1997). Political transition also underlay our comparison of Hong Kong and Macau. In December 1997 CERC hosted a workshop led by myself and Ramsey Koo of the Hong Kong Institute of Education to compare patterns in the two

territories. The chief purpose of the workshop was to discuss with authors the draft chapters for a book, but several additional people joined the event including Sou Cho Fai, Deputy Director of the Macau government's Department of Education and Youth. The book was published in 1999, the year of Macau's reversion to Chinese administration, under the title *Education and Society in Hong Kong and Macau: Comparative Perspectives on Continuity and Change* (Bray & Koo 1999). It was praised by reviewers for methodology as well as its substantive content. Every chapter compared Hong Kong and Macau, in contrast to books which had some chapters on Hong Kong and other chapters on Macau. A Chinese translation of the book, using traditional characters for readers in Hong Kong and Macau, was published by CERC in 2002.<sup>1</sup>

Other books in our series came from visitors who were well known in the field and whose works therefore added considerable weight. The third volume in the CERC Studies in Comparative Education series was by Philip Altbach, who had been an Onwel Fellow in the Faculty of Education. It focused on higher education (Altbach 1998), and was a parallel publication of a book also published in the USA. The fifth volume in the series was a retrospective of the writings of Harold Noah and Max Eckstein (1998), with a foreword by Philip Foster, and resulted from a 1996 visit to CERC by Max Eckstein. And the sixth volume was by Neville Postlethwaite (1999), who had been the first employee, in 1962, of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

We also of course provided a publication avenue for our own scholars. Lee Wing On's chapter has mentioned CERC's first Post-doctoral Fellow, Zhang Weiyuan. The fourth volume in our CERC Studies in Comparative Education series built on his doctoral thesis, which had compared school careers guidance in Shanghai and

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<sup>1</sup> A second English-language edition of this book was published two years later (Bray & Koo 2004). The second edition, in line with the subtitle of the book, analysed further continuity and change that had occurred since preparation of the first edition, specifically the reversion of Macau to Chinese administration. The second edition then appeared in two Chinese versions: one in traditional characters, published by the National Taiwan Normal University Press in 2005, and the other in simplified characters published by the People's Education Press in Beijing in 2006. CERC was very glad through these translations to reach different audiences.



Edinburgh, by adding Hong Kong data (Zhang 1998). Zhang Weiyan also organised a special issue, in Chinese, of the *Journal of Foreign Education Studies* (1997) published by East China Normal University in Shanghai containing seven articles by CERC authors and reaching an audience in Mainland China.

Among the other volumes produced during my period as Director (1996-2001), the book by Gu Mingyuan (2001) deserves particular note. Yang Rui observes in his chapter that this book exemplified CERC's role as a bridge between China and the world. The book was a collection of articles, translated from Chinese to English, written by Gu between 1980 and 1995. Gu was perhaps the most distinguished scholar of comparative education in China, but because his work was almost exclusively in Chinese he was little known internationally. CERC saw the publication of this work in English as the counterpoint of the translation of *CERCular* into Chinese for publication in Beijing Normal University's *Comparative Education Review*.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, CERC recognised that international readers would need contextual information to understand the chapters in Gu's book, including the significance of what the chapters were *not* saying. We were very pleased that Ruth Hayhoe, one of our Associate Members and herself a bridge between China and the world, wrote a very substantial introduction. We further saw the book as a valuable component for comparison when placed beside the Noah and Eckstein (1998) volume. Gu's professional life had been in the communist world, with university training first in post-revolutionary Beijing and then in Moscow. Reflecting this, many of the chapters in Gu's book were explicitly couched in the framework of Marxist thought. By contrast, Noah and Eckstein had both grown up in England following which their careers had taken them to the USA and most of their work had been in capitalist countries. The cold war had restricted the horizons of scholars in the capitalist world just as it did in the communist world. CERC therefore saw this pair of books as exemplifying what Cowen (2000, p.333) had described as comparative educations (in the plural), with the books themselves being a valuable unit for comparison. The awareness of CERC's own geographic and cultural positioning was a continuing element in the Centre's identity and contribution to the wider field.

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<sup>2</sup> See the chapter by Lee Wing On in the present book.

## Practical Application

Alongside the scholarly role of CERC has always been the practical application of its work. This was in practice a two-way flow: CERC members learned much from the 'real world' in consultancy assignments, and equally CERC members contributed conceptual thinking to projects in different countries. During the period covered by this chapter, analysis of education in small states took me to such countries as Barbados, Maldives and Swaziland, while work in larger states included China, Indonesia and Pakistan. In the framework of education and political transition, I was glad to undertake projects in such countries as Azerbaijan and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. More directly managed as CERC projects, however, were projects in Cambodia and Macau.

The Cambodia work arose from links I had made when undertaking assignments under the UNESCO and UNICEF umbrellas on household and community financing of education. It was funded by the World Bank and focused on cost-sharing in higher education. The work was undertaken by myself and Zhang Minxuan, who at that time was a PhD student.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the valuable experience of learning and contributing, it generated some much-needed revenue for CERC.

The Macau work was again linked to political transition, and could be seen as a product of the wider comparative analyses that we were undertaking. Immediately after Macau's reversion to Chinese administration in December 1999, the new government desired a review of the higher education sector. CERC was approached because we were external to Macau but in geographic proximity and with colleagues having strong understanding of the issues. I led a team comprising Roy Butler who had been an Administrative Adviser at HKU, Philip Hui who was one of our HKU alumni who had taught at the University of Macau and at that time worked at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and Ora Kwo who was a CERC member with whom I had collaborated (and continue to collaborate) on many projects. As always we were given excellent administrative support by Emily Mang. The full report

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequently he became Dean of the Faculty of Education at Shanghai Normal University, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Education Commission, and President of Shanghai Normal University. In these roles he remained a strong collaborator with CERC.

was made widely available in Macau, with the Executive Summary in Chinese and Portuguese as well as English. A modified version for wider circulation was subsequently published by CERC (Bray et al. 2002). We felt pleased with the project, again having both learned, contributed and earned some income for CERC.

## **Professional Bodies in Comparative Education**

The WCCES has already been mentioned several times in this book, and has featured strongly throughout CERC's history. The WCCES was established in 1970 to bring together five national and regional comparative education societies (Masemann, Bray & Manzon 2007). Over the decades it became a very significant body, and by 1996 had 31 member societies. The World Council organises periodic World Congresses, normally at intervals of three years. Lee Wing On has mentioned that he and I attended our first World Congress in Czechoslovakia in 1992.

Among the visitors to CERC that we were able to welcome several times during the 1990s was Wolfgang Mitter. He was resident in Germany, and was WCCES President from 1991 to 1996. Again making a link to our preoccupation with political transitions, we felt that much could be learned from Wolfgang Mitter about the reunification of East and West Germany and its implications for education.

During a 1994 visit to Hong Kong, Wolfgang Mitter indicated that the WCCES Secretary General, Raymond Ryba, was looking for an Assistant Secretary General and wished to sound me out on whether I would be interested in taking on the role. I welcomed the opportunity, feeling that it would be good for CERC as well as an avenue through which I could learn more about the field. I therefore became WCCES Assistant Secretary General in 1994, finding that I was again to some extent playing a bridging role with China because the WCCES was engaged in delicate negotiations with colleagues in Beijing and elsewhere. These negotiations concerned the question whether the World Congress would be held in Beijing, and were influenced by continued aftershocks from the June 1989 incident in Beijing's Tiananmen Square (Mitter 2007, pp.56-58).

When Raymond Ryba resigned for health reasons in 1996, Vandra Masemann took over as Secretary General and I continued my role as

Assistant Secretary General. Then, four years later, I was myself elected Secretary General at the 2000 World Council meeting in Bologna, Italy. Among the domains with which I was immediately involved was the 2001 World Congress in South Korea, and in my role as Secretary General I edited a special issue of the *International Review of Education* which was republished as a book (Bray 2003) and translated into nine languages.<sup>4</sup> CERC helped the WCCES by including this and other WCCES volumes for sale at its book tables in comparative education conferences, and also included WCCES news in each issue of *CERCular*. In turn the WCCES gave CERC visibility and many connections. Beyond the period covered by this chapter, I became WCCES President at the 2004 World Congress in Cuba, and held the post until the 2007 World Congress in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the latter Congress CERC launched the book of histories of the WCCES and its members that had been co-edited by Vandra Masemann, Maria Manzon and myself for our CERC Studies in Comparative Education series (Masemann, Bray & Manzon 2007).

All chapters in this book have also mentioned the close relationship between CERC and the CESHK. All CERC Directors have been CESHK Presidents; Emily Mang was for many years the CESHK Secretary; and other colleagues have supported the CESHK in other roles. Similarly, Lee Wing On and I were in 1995 elected to the Board of Directors of the Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA), and in 1996 I was elected for a three-year term to the Board of Directors of the CIES.<sup>5</sup> These roles have fitted well with the mission of the Faculty of Education and with HKU as a whole, in addition to being avenues for CERC leadership and service.

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<sup>4</sup> The languages were Bosnian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Farsi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

<sup>5</sup> Having been a member of the Board of Directors, I was eligible for nomination for Vice President (which in the CIES system is a transitional post that conveys the incumbent in annual steps to President-Elect, President and Past-President). I was approached several times during the following decade to stand for Vice President, but did not feel that other commitments would permit me to take on the role. Finally in 2014 I did agree to be nominated, and was elected. In this role I shall have major responsibility for the CIES annual conference to be held in Vancouver, 6-10 March 2016. CERC (and the HKU Faculty of Education) will have strong visibility at that event, which will thus be another avenue for leadership and international collaboration.

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## 4

# Defining a Comparative Identity

## 2002

*Bob ADAMSON*

### My Introduction to Comparative Education

My first degree was in French. As part of my degree, I was required to spend a year in France, with the choice of either working as a teaching assistant or studying at a French university. I opted to work in a school, teaching English, and in my spare time I tried to experience as much of the country as I could. This year abroad gave me the confidence and taste for further ventures away from home. I decided to train as a teacher of French, English as a foreign language and Classical Studies. The first two subjects were to give me international mobility, the third was a subject I studied for pleasure. On graduating with my Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in 1983, I had two job offers—one as a French teacher in a quiet and lovely Welsh seaside town, the other as a lecturer in English in Taiyuan Teachers College in China. It was a dilemma, as the Welsh job promised stability and a pleasant environment. But feeling adventurous, I chose China—a decision I never regretted, as my experiences were marvellous. I loved the teaching (and I am still in touch with many of my students more than 30 years later) and I found many similarities (as well as differences) between my life in China and my life in France.

I was particularly intrigued by the curriculum reforms that occurred while I was working there, and this became the theme of my MPhil research (Adamson 1992), entitled *An Analysis of Junior Middle School EFL Teacher Training in the People's Republic of China*. Later I came to realise that I had undertaken a comparison across time, as I monitored changes in my college in the curriculum for training teachers of English as a Foreign Language between 1978 and 1984. Incidentally, as part of the reforms of 1984, I was asked to provide broadening



classes for the students, so I offered a French course (which was hampered by the lack of teaching resources) and a course on ‘The Origins of Western Civilisation’, which I based on a textbook I had written as a project for my Classical Studies component of my PGCE.

Although I left Taiyuan for Hong Kong after four years, I became involved in a textbook project with the People’s Education Press, the curriculum development agency in the Ministry of Education in China. In the archives in Beijing, I found English textbooks dating back to the founding of the People’s Republic of China, which inspired my doctorate (Adamson 1998), *English in China: the Junior Secondary School Curriculum 1949-1994*. Again adopting a historical comparative dimension, I charted the reforms in the official school curriculum through periods of political upheavals and economic modernisation.

The unconscious comparative educationalist in me was awoken through conversations with Mark Bray after I joined the HKU Faculty of Education in 1995. He encouraged me to participate in CERC activities and suggested that I might benefit from attending the annual CIES conference. I went to the conferences in Williamsburg (1996), Mexico City (1997) and Toronto (1999), and also presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Comparative Education Societies in South Korea in 2001, by which time I considered myself a fully fledged comparative educationalist—although I was not completely sure what that term actually signified. In response to this uncertainty in my mind—and finding no satisfactory answer in the available literature—I had the idea of compiling a book about comparative education research, one that set out what a comparative educationalist is and does. I discussed the idea with Mark Mason and Mark Bray, both of whom were enthusiastic, and the seed that grew into *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007; 2014) was planted. The book took over five years to come together, but I found it a very valuable exercise in clarifying my understanding of the field (as well as in learning the challenges and pitfalls of editing a book). Writing a chapter on comparing curricula with Paul Morris (Adamson & Morris 2007; 2014) was especially useful, as I was forced to work out a holistic view of curriculum studies. I also came to define my academic identity as ‘a researcher in curriculum with a special interest in language education issues and a capacity to employ comparative perspectives’.

## **The Development of CERC**

CERC began, under the Directorship of Lee Wing On in a small office in HKU. The size of the office—although it has often relocated—has never grown much, but the scope and impact of CERC’s work certainly has. CERC membership has grown steadily from 36 in 1995 to 106 at the time of my Directorship in 2002. It is now widely recognised as a leading international centre for comparative education. As Max Eckstein commented in a book review, CERC “has become a place to be reckoned with in such comparative and international activities” (Eckstein 2002, p.96). My own contribution as Director was comparatively modest. I took over the reins when in 2002 Mark Bray was appointed Head in HKU of a newly-created (and short-lived) mega Department of Curriculum and Educational Studies, which was itself a transition to a unitary Faculty of Education of which he became the founding Dean. Six months later, I left to take up a position in Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and handed over CERC to the capable leadership of Mark Mason.

Several factors have contributed to the development of CERC’s profile. As I mentioned in the message from the Director (Adamson 2002, p.1), the importance attached to comparative education by the Hong Kong government has encouraged the growth of the field. Local and overseas scholars have been attracted by the opportunities afforded by Hong Kong, particularly given the rich geo-political complexities of the region. This scholarly flow, in turn, has led to the creation of



Bob Adamson, CESHK Conference, 2002

research centres, such as CERC in 1994. Courses in comparative education have been established, while the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) has brought together over 100 people from within and outside Hong Kong with a common interest in comparative education especially through its annual conferences. These have contributed to forming a more visible comparative education community beyond HKU.

More specifically for CERC, I believe that its numerous publications have played a crucial role. The regular and comprehensive coverage of CERC activities in *CERCular*, as well as the website and, more recently, social media, have helped to spread the message. In 2002, I reported to the seventh annual meeting that *CERCular* has attracted the journal *Compare* to place loose leaflet inserts in the mailing of the newsletter for the issue No. 2 of 2002, yielding an income of £85 (around HK\$1,010) for CERC. The books in the formidable CERC Series in Comparative Education now number over 30 titles. This series focuses on subjects which explicitly have comparative perspectives. Most publications in the series have been printed in English, and have been widely distributed in the English-speaking world. To enhance circulation to the Chinese-speaking world, the translation of some books has been undertaken, starting with volume 7, *Education and Society in Hong Kong and Macau* (Bray & Koo 2002). The positive reviews in international journals, as well as the strong sales and download figures, attest to the quality of the output.

The CERC Monograph Series,<sup>1</sup> which I initiated during my brief tenure as CERC Director (and which I regard as my major contribution from that time), represents another channel for shorter, focused work. The inaugural monograph entitled *Education in the Market Place* was based on the dissertation of Yoko Yamato, a distinction graduate from the second cohort (1999-2001) of the MEd in Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong (Yamato 2003). The Education in Developing Asia series allowed CERC to collaborate with the Asian Development Bank in publishing key manuscripts, two of them authored by CERC Directors (Bray 2002; Lee 2002). Book displays at conferences in Hong Kong and overseas have provided CERC with a

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<sup>1</sup> The Monograph Series was renamed as CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and International Education and Development in 2008 (starting with Monograph 5) under the directorship of Mark Mason.

visible presence that is well worth the logistical challenges of transporting quantities of books from the CERC store cupboard to the venues and returning the unsold stock. (CERC veterans are accustomed to requests for help from Mark Bray or Emily Mang on the lines of “Could you manage to squeeze a dozen CERC books into your suitcase?”.)

Mentioning Emily Mang leads me to a further factor underpinning the successful development of CERC, which has been the quality of administration. For 17 years, CERC benefitted from Emily’s efficiency and cheerful personality. The stability has enabled CERC to maintain and fine-tune its administrative structures and relationships with stakeholders.

Another factor that has helped the growth of CERC’s reputation is the contribution of individual members to local and international organisations. Mark Bray’s significant links and service with UNESCO (through the International Institute for Educational Planning [IIEP] and as UNESCO Chair Professor in Comparative Education) are documented in his own account, and various CERC members have served on the World Council of Comparative Education Societies in different capacities (including two as President), on the US-based Comparative and International Education Society Board of Directors in the USA, on the Comparative Education Society of Asia committee and, locally, on the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong committee. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the symbiotic relationship between CERC and CESHK has been instrumental in the mutual development of both parties, with CERC offering academic, administrative and logistical support for CESHK activities, and CESHK offering a venue for CERC to disseminate and discuss the research findings generated by projects undertaken by members.

## **Embedded Role of CERC**

My connections to CERC have brought me two major benefits. The first is the personal connections with key figures in the Centre’s history such as Mark Bray, Lee Wing On, Mark Mason, Yang Rui and Emily Mang. I have learnt a great deal from them about comparative education and their respective areas of education for development, citizenship and values education, philosophy for education, and academic leadership. I

also gained valuable insights from them into professional ethics, administrative leadership, team-building and effective interpersonal relationships. The second benefit accruing from my association with CERC is the platform that it has provided me for broadening my academic horizons, participating in international activities, and conceptualising, conducting and disseminating my research. Without CERC, I doubt that I would have maintained my interest and research in comparative education.

In essence, CERC plays a transformative role by offering individuals an opportunity for connectivity and an enhanced presence in the academic world. It offers transformation without barriers, in that Centre membership is open to all interested parties and no membership fee is charged. CERC possesses another advantage in that the Centre is embedded in a Faculty of Education within a university. This embeddedness means that CERC can acquire a physical space (albeit one that shifts from building to building from time to time), can access institutional resources (such as conference rooms, financing, administrative infrastructures, bookstores, technology, catering facilities and transportation) that free-standing organisations might lack. It also means that cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional expertise is readily available—historians, sociologists, philosophers, scientists, lawyers, engineers, architects and experts in literature and other areas can be accessed.

## **Future Directions**

Universities and their constituent parts are likely to undergo further changes as technology impacts upon pedagogy, the nature and value of knowledge, communications (including languages), travel, and the use of physical space, as demographics alter the composition of the student body, as politicians continue to base their education policies on international benchmarks and as public finances are stretched. The impacts upon centres such as CERC will be profound and, in most cases, excitingly positive. I foresee that more people will learn about comparative education and more data will be available; the predominance of Western discourses in academia in general and comparative education in particular will be increasingly challenged (which is a key mission for CERC); international collaboration, facilitated by the internet, will

reduce the demand for air travel; classrooms will become increasingly virtual; intergenerational and intercultural learning will become the norm; comparative educationalists will strive to maintain core values while addressing politicians' concerns; and the nature of comparative education will reflect the new priorities of changing and challenging times.

My recommendation is that CERC should take a lead in piloting comparative education through these changes and challenges. CERC should endeavour to have an input into the international agenda put forward by UNESCO and other key agencies, and these agenda could guide our areas of focus. CERC could invest in information technology that enhances environmental sustainability, explore effective pedagogies and maintain the highest ethical standards.

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## The 'Development Turn' in CERC 2002 – 2008

*Mark MASON*

### **My Introduction to Comparative Education**

I grew up in Apartheid South Africa, a context which has shaped much of my working life. As many young teachers do, I went into education to try and make a difference in the world. The fact that my parents could not afford to send four children to university meant that each of us had to find bursaries and scholarships in order to get a university degree. In my case it was a bursary from the Cape Education Department—in reality, the Cape Education Department for white schools only—which meant a service commitment to teach in a white government school after graduation. As a secondary teacher of Mathematics and English who had been made aware—at home, at high school and at university—of the cruelties and injustices of Apartheid, I became increasingly involved in activist education politics: working with teachers across the racialised education system to the ultimate end of bringing about the collapse of Apartheid education and, with it, the Apartheid state.

We didn't call it education development at the time. It was activist politics in the face of severe state repression and considerable risk to your job, your personal safety, and even your life, especially if you were not white. I remember, for example, while part of a delegation of teachers at a National Education Crisis Conference convened by the democratic left in 1986 to consider the national schools boycott situation, other delegates coming under attack by proxies of the state, with at least one death. We were subsequently protected through the night (for that was when we had to meet in order to avoid further attack) by armed members of the underground resistance. All that helped to constitute my first exposure to education development in contexts less fortunate than my own. The consequences of poverty and exclusion, in



just about every sense of the term, were starkly visible—if you chose to see them—in my own country: in fact, just across the railway tracks.

Since my third or fourth year at university I had become intensely interested in the nature of political and social change. One of my lecturers had made Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)—banned in South Africa at the time—available to us under a fake cover in the university library. It was in fact with this lecturer that I published my first article in the field: a critique of the Guidance curriculum for black schools, which was a thinly disguised instrument of social control and acquiescence to Apartheid's *status quo*, published in 1984 in the *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* (I was also qualified as a Guidance teacher and school counsellor).

My growing interest in social theory and political philosophy led me to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship to follow a Master's degree in these fields. At the time I was not sleeping at home for fear of arrest and detention following the suspension of the rule of law that came with a recently declared 'State of Emergency', and I arrived at the selection interview in Cape Town with a rucksack containing my sleeping bag and other essentials. I feared a conservative American selection panel and tried to hide the rucksack and my reasons for sleeping only in 'safe houses', but the truth was soon out and I regretted a lost opportunity for graduate study abroad. However, unbeknown to me, the South African Fulbright commission was committed to capacity building for a post-Apartheid South Africa, and awarded all fully-funded scholarships to black South African students, with perhaps only one for a white student. I got that scholarship. I chose Columbia University in New York, and followed two Master's degrees in political philosophy (hence my background and interest in ethics), social theory and education studies.

Back in South Africa I took a position teaching philosophy of education at the University of Cape Town. Apartheid was formally ended in 1994, and Nelson Mandela was installed as South Africa's first democratically elected President. I contributed substantially to the writing of secondary education curriculum material for adults who had been denied a decent education under Apartheid because of the colour of their skin (Mason 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d). I also led one of eight national teams tasked with writing new modules and material for teacher education in a post-Apartheid South Africa (Adendorff, Gultig & Mason 2001; Adendorff et al. 2002): all in the field of education development, and still with little direct exposure to comparative edu-

cation internationally. With the formal end of Apartheid also came a concerted and well justified attempt to change the racial and gender profile of both public and private institutions. Ironically, as a white male, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and chose to pursue my career abroad until the 'affirmative action' pendulum had swung back, in my naïve view, after about three years. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) offered a position in ethics, values and education that seemed ideal, and after a telephone interview at four o'clock in the morning my time, I was on my way from Africa to Asia.

Shortly after my arrival at HKU, Mark Bray knocked at my door to introduce CERC to me. I told him my field was social theory and political philosophy, and that I knew very little of comparative education, but he had apparently read my CV carefully, including my mention of involvement in education politics and development in South Africa. While I was not yet aware of the close association in the academic domain of the fields of comparative education, international education, and educational development, Mark certainly was, and saw CERC as a natural home for me well before I realised it. Thus was my entry into the field of comparative education through education development—albeit by another name.

My training in philosophy and in language, and I suppose in mathematics as well, meant that I brought to comparative education an interest in analysis of the more intractable conceptual issues in the field. I had also in my first degree a fairly rigorous training in research methodology and statistics; but more than in the empirical research going on in comparative education, I was interested in its concepts, discourse, scholarship and publication. While keeping alive my interest in social and political philosophy—not least through the completion in my first years at HKU of my doctoral thesis in contemporary social theory (more specifically, a critique of postmodern ethics and the implications for education in late modernity)—I grew more interested in the journals in comparative and international education and development, reading as widely as I could in these fields. What was the development theory behind what we were doing in practice in South Africa in the 1980s? What were the key concepts, debates and issues in these fields? What, in fact, was comparative education itself?

HKU's generous conference travel support enabled me to take myself off, in an attempt to answer these questions, to meetings of four of the biggest associations (at least in the Anglophone research

community) in the field: the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET, hosting the International Conference on Education and Development), the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE), and the Comparative Education Society in Europe (CESE). Having long been active in South Africa's Kenton Education Association, a grouping of progressive academics seeking solutions to education under and after Apartheid, I also became increasingly active in the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES), and still serve as an Associate Editor of its journal, the *Southern African Review of Education*.

## The Development and Embedded Role of CERC

My initial role in CERC was naturally in its publications committee, focused primarily on the editing of volumes submitted for publication in the *CERC Studies in Comparative Education* series (subsequently co-published by Kluwer and then Springer). Given my linguistic, conceptual and analytic background and skills, I quickly found myself at home here. I was proud to read feedback from the likes of Robert LeVine, who published with us, to the effect that “the academic editors at CERC gave the manuscript the meticulous scrutiny and questioning that has unfortunately gone out of style at so many academic publishers: CERC has a process that ought to be the envy of other publishers”. In time, following Mark Bray's departure for Paris in 2006 to head UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, I took over as series editor, a role to which I devoted much time and energy in the view that it was one of the most important ways in which CERC could make a real contribution to scholarship in the field globally.

CERC was already established as the leading centre in the field in Asia.<sup>1</sup> I wanted to enhance its position globally, not least by publishing books in the series that were more global in orientation. Springer's

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<sup>1</sup> In his inaugural professorial lecture at the HKU on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Faculty of Education, which was also the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CERC, Mark Bray (2004) cited several senior international scholars in the field attesting to this. He also remarked on the role of HKU scholars in shifting the centre of gravity of comparative education scholarship towards East Asia.

reputation as a publisher helped to attract some excellent and high-profile international scholars to the series. Looking back at the period in which the series grew so strongly, I realise how demanding it was. By the time I handed over the CERC directorship, when in October 2008 I left HKU for the Hong Kong Institute of Education, former CERC director, Bob Adamson (who, now at HKIEd, played no small role in enticing me across the harbour), indicated that he had begun fearing for my health. CERC's unrelenting pace alongside prodigious reading and editing quite independently of my own academic responsibilities in the Faculty of Education had taken their toll, but the series was established as one of the two leading series in the field globally.

None of this could have happened without Emily Mang, CERC's Senior Research Assistant and production editor. Six long days a week in the office was normal for both of us. And when big events were in the offing, such as CERC's hosting in early 2007 of the joint conference of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) and the Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA), for Emily to be in the CERC office right through the night was not unheard of. It is very difficult for me to pay adequate tribute here to Emily, or to set down quite how great was her contribution to CERC. A Master's graduate in comparative education, her ongoing commitment to CERC both administratively and academically meant that she knew very well who was who in the field. Without Emily's enthusiasm, commitment, knowledge, administration, organisation, energy and skills, we would not have achieved half of what we have in CERC.

At the joint CESHK/CESA conference in 2007 we launched what has become the best-known book in the CERC/Springer series, *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007). It is now in its second edition (2014), translated into eight languages,<sup>2</sup> and well established as an essential course reader across the world.

Another important strategy both in embedding CERC's contribution to the Faculty and in connecting CERC to the field globally was the CERC Seminar series. There was no shortage of senior international scholars coming to or passing through Hong Kong, and we often took

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<sup>2</sup> The first edition has been translated into Chinese, Farsi, French, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. The second edition has been translated into Russian and Turkish, and is being considered for Arabic.



Launch of the first edition of *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods*, 2007 (L-R: Mark Bray, Bob Adamson, Mark Mason, and Anthony Sweeting)

advantage of their visits to request a seminar presentation. We also offered seminar presentation opportunities to our PhD students, enabling them to showcase their work in front of critical friends. Some of our most successful PhD students went on to make substantial contributions to the field, not least the editor of this volume, Maria Manzon, whose thesis was one of two PhD theses awarded the Li Ka Shing Prize in the Faculties of Architecture, Arts, Business and Economics, Education, Law and Social Sciences at HKU in 2010, and whose subsequent book, *Comparative Education: The Construction of a Field* (2011), published in the CERC/Springer series, has been lauded as a landmark in comparative education (Mehta 2013; Mitter 2013; Perez Centeno 2012; Rappleye 2012).

Alongside the CERC/Springer series we developed the *CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and International Education and Development*,<sup>3</sup> a smaller and more flexible series focused more strongly on policy developments and consequences in the field. CESHK's journal, the *Comparative Education Bulletin*, was also edited and produced at CERC during the period that I served as CESHK's President (2006-2008). While at CERC I also took over from Mark Bray as the Regional

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<sup>3</sup> Originally called the *CERC Monograph* series.



CERC's PhD students (L-R: Li Mei, Hu Jingfei, Maria Manzon, Mitsuko Maeda [extreme right]) and post-doctoral fellow, Jiang Kai

Editor (Asia and the Pacific) of one of the leading journals in the field globally, the *International Journal of Educational Development*, of which I would have the opportunity to serve as Editor-in-Chief a few years later. While CERC was certainly demanding, it also gave me opportunities to develop my own career.

As I intimated earlier, the question, what in fact is comparative education, nagged me throughout—and the more I learned about the field, the less sure I became of the answer. This was the subject of my CESHK Presidential Address in 2008, where I argued in a paper that considered the identity and boundaries of comparative education that it is not a substantively distinct field but, rather, a distinctive method. I defended the view that it is not possible to isolate substantively a field of comparative education within or overlapping only in part with the field of education studies. Debates about the identity and boundaries of comparative education have not succeeded in making either sufficiently clear. My thesis was, and remains, that the content of the field is not identified by any significant differences from the content of the field of education studies as a whole: it is the method specific to comparative education that identifies it as such. Where comparison is used as an explicit research method, more than the implicit comparison that underlies most ways in which we make sense of the world, comparative education is a methodologically distinct domain of education studies. No more than that. But also, of course, no less than that, since com-

parison offers a very powerful means of understanding the world and, in our case, education.

## Future Directions

That having been said, it in no way undermines the legitimacy or the value of comparative research, or its role in the future. The contrary is indeed the case, given, for example, increasing rates of globalisation and the considerable interest in international comparative studies of student learning achievement undertaken under the aegis of, for example, the OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement). CERC's role in contributing good research to the field of comparative education internationally is accordingly likely to increase in importance.

The challenges remain the same as they always have: human and financial resources. Finding good people to position and lead CERC through the post-2015 educational development period is of prime importance, for CERC can and should make a strong contribution to new global initiatives following Education for All (EFA) and associated with the educational priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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## Viewing CERC through a Chinese Lens 2008 – 2010

*YANG Rui*

### My Introduction to Comparative Education

I became a university student in China in 1981, five years after the university entrance examination (*Gaokao*) was resumed in late 1977. As a boy brought up in the countryside (my parents were sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution), that was a profound change for me. The growth of my academic career afterwards echoes the more general change of China's position in the scholarly world, and more specifically, the development of China and its scholars in the field of comparative and international studies in education.

As a young student in the 1980s, I was extremely keen to learn foreign ideas and thoughts. Similar to the situation in most parts of the non-Western world, the West has come to non-Western societies with huge prestige. In the Chinese daily discourse, if something is seen as foreign (*yang*, 洋), it indicates it is advanced and largely good, while being local (*tu*, 土) means bad and/or ugly. Although enrolled in the English Language and Literature programme, I spent much more time reading other works, especially on Philosophy and Sociology. I clearly remember that nearly all the works I had read then were exclusively 'Western'. During this period, I read widely to find a field suitable for my future academic life. My disciplinary foci shifted quite dramatically from (Western) aesthetics to (comparative) children's literature.

I was admitted as the top student in my prefecture and within the top 10 in the Anhui province. Therefore during the first one and a half years, I was in a reasonably comfortable position in the class. However, I paid little attention to my own major, thus my examination results were not as good as my classmates, especially my female fellow students (as was the norm in China, there were more girls than boys in

our English programme). By the second part of the third year, I realised how time had flown. By then I had become determined to pursue an academic career, therefore I focused on deciding on which field to sit the examination for my Master's degree. I also wanted to prove to myself that I was not less smart than my fellow classmates. I then read books on education and psychology. As the time to register for the postgraduate entrance examination was fast approaching, I chose comparative education.

I succeeded in my examination and became a Master's student in Comparative Education in Fujian Normal University, China, in 1985. Since then I have always had the label on me even though I have written very few works that were strictly comparative. My Master's supervisor, Wu Wenkan, was designated by the People's Education Press to edit a national textbook of comparative education together with Yang Hanqin. The textbook was first published in 1989 (Wu & Yang 1989), and was received very well in Mainland China as well as in Taiwan. I participated in the entire process of its compilation and even wrote the section on the impact of population on educational development. The article appeared in 1987 in *Educational Research*, China's top journal in education (Yang 1987a). It was my first scholarly publication. Such an experience paved the way for my observation of the development and politics of comparative education in different social and cultural backgrounds later in my academic career. Upon my graduation in 1988, I was selected by the then State Education Commission to work as an editor for *Foreign Education* based at the then China National Institute of Educational Research. I did not stay there, and chose to work at the newly established Shantou University.

Since then I have formally become a researcher in comparative education. I was an active member of the Chinese national and Guangdong provincial societies of comparative education. I have since moved quite a long distance to Hong Kong, Australia and back, but such an identity has remained. The interesting thing is that I wrote about education in other countries when I was within the Chinese Mainland, but almost exclusively about Chinese education while I was (and still am) outside the Mainland. This in itself is telling of how comparative education is perceived and practiced depending on one's location in the world.

## The Development of CERC

Even for many researchers within the field of comparative education, the contemporary scholarly world is far more divided than they have thought, due to different intellectual traditions, linguistic backgrounds, and socio-political systems. From this perspective, CERC is in a unique position culturally as well as geographically. The great strength of CERC lies in the cultural diversity of its core members, which has been reflected strongly in its research products and publication series. From the very beginning, all the Directors have not only demonstrated such quality themselves, but also carried out measures to achieve this in all CERC activities including teaching programmes, seminar series and research publications.

For me, as someone from a non-mainstream background, such uniqueness has always been very evident. I personally highly value this and have tried to maintain and even enhance it. This quality indeed distinguishes CERC markedly against an ‘ironic’ context that comparative education policy studies, as a field of research claiming to be defined by cross-cultural pursuits, is still, in Cowen’s words (1996, p.165) “impressively parochial”. One good example is CERC’s publication in 2002 of Gu Mingyuan’s collected works which were originally published in Chinese and through this book were made available in English (Gu 2002). This volume introduced some significant work by arguably the most important of China’s comparative education researchers to the international circle in much detail and great depth. Such a bridge role has led to achievements in various shapes and forms. CERC has therefore been a high priority for many eminent scholars in Western societies to visit, and to gain access to and understanding of China. At the same time, various Chinese scholars have been able, through CERC to establish and further enhance their global professional networks.

## The Embedded Role of CERC

My academic inquiry has long been linked with Hong Kong and with CERC in particular. In 1986, during the first year of my Master’s studies, I wrote a piece on education in Hong Kong for the *China Education Daily* (Yang 1987b). The newspaper accepted it and used it

as a feature article for a new column on Education in Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, at that time few Chinese people knew much outside the Mainland, and even fewer studied education in Hong Kong. The column could not continue.

In 1994, I applied for PhD study in Comparative Education at HKU. Mark Bray recommended me to Lee Wing On, the then Chairperson of the Higher Degree Committee, stating that “Mr. Yang is a person to be encouraged”. He added that I could be part of the newly developed Comparative Education Research Centre. I was then offered an opportunity to visit the Centre for three weeks to develop a good research proposal for my PhD studies. It took me more than a year to secure approval from the Chinese government to come study at HKU. I enrolled as a higher degree student in comparative education under the supervision of Mark Bray and Law Wing Wah in June 1996. Subsequently I transferred to Australia, where I completed my PhD studies at the University of Sydney in 2001.

I joined CERC again in 2005 as a Research Assistant Professor, but only for about half a year. In early 2008 I joined the Faculty again, and started to be heavily involved in CERC activities. In April 2008, due to Mark Mason’s departure for the Hong Kong Institute of Education, I served as the Director of CERC to 2010 when Mark Bray came back from UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris. For me, the major reason to take the position



Launch of the second edition of  
*Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods*, 2014  
(L-R: Liz Jackson, Mark Bray, Yang Rui, Bob Adamson, and Emily Mang)

was to carry on CERC's flag. I tried hard to maintain CERC's high profile as a global centre of excellence, including its substantial publication series with Springer, and seminars by international scholars, among others. At the same time I made decisions regarding budgeting, staffing and project applications to sustain and further develop CERC's regular operation and further development. During the period, I served first as the Secretary and then Vice President and President of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong, organised a special issue of *Comparative Education* on conducting educational research on Confucian Heritage Cultures, and continued to link CERC closely with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies.

## Future Directions

In a context of increasingly intensified globalisation, the scholarly world features great complexities and contradictions. On the one hand, educational exchange relationships between developed and developing (not accidentally non-Western) countries have remained characterised by imbalances and asymmetries with traditional forms of North-South relationships between donors and recipients. On the other hand, the contemporary academic world is becoming more multi-polar. Conventional boundaries between the so-called 'East and West' and 'North and South' have become blurred. Such blurred boundaries do not necessarily make things easier for us as comparative education researchers. On the contrary, we are required to be even better equipped by comparative education to tackle the complexities. Such an actuality strengthens CERC's future roles.

A critical mass of non-Western scholarship is forcing a re-consideration of traditional concepts and theories. The latest work in research fields is done at many more centres of scholarship than before. Some East Asian societies have made impressive achievements. For example, Chinese science has come into its own in a way that few believed would be possible. In the 1970s, China ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the number of scientific articles cited internationally. China's international ranking increased from 38<sup>th</sup> in 1979, to 23<sup>rd</sup> in 1982, 18<sup>th</sup> in 1992, 15<sup>th</sup> in 1989, 12<sup>th</sup> in 1988, and 5<sup>th</sup> in 2003. The number of peer-reviewed papers published by Chinese researchers rose 64-fold over the past 30 years, overtaking Japan and the United Kingdom in 2006 to become the

world's second largest producer of research papers. Jonathan Adams, a research evaluation director at Thomson Reuters, calls China's growth "awe-inspiring" (as cited in Moore 2010), and Marginson (2008) describes China as "remaking the knowledge economy landscape". Located within China while maintaining fully connected with the global community, CERC could be safely expected to contribute much more with greater excitements.

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## New Directions with UNESCO and More 2010 – present

*Mark BRAY*

### Gaining an Expanded Horizon from Leave in Paris

In March 2006 I took a period of no-pay leave from the University of Hong Kong (HKU), initially for three years and then with a fourth year added. I moved to Paris, taking up the role of Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). This was challenging but very exciting work with a truly global mandate.

I had had long links with IIEP, having first visited it as a Master's student in 1976 when seeking materials on Nigeria, and with subsequent intermittent visits. IIEP had commissioned a book on shadow education in 1999 and a sequel in 2003 (Bray 1999a, 2003a). Also in 1999, IIEP had published my book about household costs of education in Cambodia, and the following year the second edition of a book about double-shift schooling (Bray 1999b, 2000). My work in CERC, together with administrative experience as Dean of the HKU Faculty of Education (2002-06) and extensive international consultancy work of the types that HKU permitted and encouraged, were among the features that attracted the IIEP appointment panel when I was interviewed for the post.

The main IIEP mandate was training and research, which resembled the mandate at HKU and other universities but with a more practical orientation. The training was through short courses, a Diploma/Master's programme, and distance education for planners and similar personnel in Ministries of Education and elsewhere. The research programme was applied rather than theoretical, including attention to mechanisms to ensure utilisation of the research rather than



mere publication (IIEP 2007). In HKU the current vocabulary for attention to such mechanisms is Knowledge Exchange.

Located in Paris, IIEP used both French and English in its daily life; and as a UNESCO body it also paid attention to the other official UNESCO languages, namely Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish. Working in conjunction with UNESCO Headquarters, which was in walking distance, IIEP was a very exciting place for someone trained in and keen on comparative education. My post required extensive travel in all continents, and I was closely involved in the implementation and further shaping of agendas such as Education for All (EFA) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

While in IIEP I was able to maintain my own research interests, including shadow education. To follow up the 1999 and 2003 publications, in 2007 I organised a Policy Forum on an established IIEP model which brought together policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and personnel from international agencies. I found the model very effective, and later used it in CERC. The 2007 Policy Forum was entitled *Confronting the Shadow Education System: What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?*, and led to a book with the same title (Bray 2009) that has appeared in 20 languages.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of my four years I had to decide whether to remain in the UNESCO system or return to HKU. Somewhat to the surprise of colleagues who perceived UNESCO as prestigious and exciting on the global stage, I chose to return to HKU. I was glad that I did. And I was able to bring back not only expanded professional horizons but also links that contributed to the further development of CERC.

## Old Paths and New Ventures

The resumption at HKU was not entirely easy. During the four years that I had been absent, some fundamental shifts had occurred in personnel and University policies; but those were perhaps less disconcerting than some of the continuities—i.e. some of the same people were still arguing about the same things, four years older. I was happy

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<sup>1</sup> The languages are: Arabic, Armenian, Azeri, Bangla, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Georgian, Hindi, Kannada, Korean, Mongolian, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Sinhala, Spanish, Urdu and Uzbek.

to return to teaching with an MEd elective module on comparative education and with courses for BEd and PGDE students on the Hong Kong education system. However I had no research students, and in that respect was starting from zero.

The reconnect with CERC contributed to the sense of homecoming. Emily Mang gave me a form to reapply for CERC membership, and almost immediately I was invited by the Management Committee to take a vacant seat as a co-opted member. I was glad to do that, supporting Yang Rui in his role as Director. It happened, though, that the period of office of all elected members was about to expire, thereby precipitating the need for elections. Three seats were available, to which Yang Rui, Bjorn Nordtveit and I were elected. According to the Constitution, the Director is elected from among the elected members. Yang Rui, welcoming me back to HKU and supported by Bjorn Nordtveit, felt that I should again take up the Directorship. I agreed to do so, thereby again gladly finding myself in a role that I had relinquished eight years earlier. Soon after, Yang Rui became Assistant Dean for Research Projects and Centres. This enabled CERC to continue to benefit from his inputs in an *ex officio* role that assisted liaison with other Centres in the Faculty.

Many of CERC's activities since my resumption of the Directorship have followed well-established paths. They include:

- *Seminars.* The CERC seminars have maintained regularity, with 24 in 2010/11, 25 in 2011/12, 23 in 2012/13, and 16 in 2013/14.
- *Publications.* During the same set of years, four volumes were published in our CERC-Springer series and three in our Monographs series. In addition, seven translations appeared; and one book was published by the Commonwealth Secretariat but with recognition of CERC as the producer (Menefee & Bray 2012).
- *Links with professional societies.* CERC retained a strong presence at the annual conferences of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK), and hosted its 2012 conference. CERC members on its Executive Committee included Bjorn Nordtveit, Anatoly Oleksiyenko and Jae Park, and CERC maintained the CESHK website. CERC also retained a strong presence at the biennial conferences of the

Comparative Education Society of Asia (CESA) and the annual conferences of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES).

- *Links with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES)*. Highlights included the World Congresses in Turkey in 2010 and in Argentina in 2013 with strong participation of CERC members and our regular book table. Having been a WCCES President, I was a co-opted member of the WCCES Executive Committee from 2007 to 2012, and then became UNESCO Liaison Representative. Emily Mang continued work as WCCES Assistant Secretary General until her departure from CERC in 2014.

Among innovations was the creation in 2010 of three Special Interest Groups (SIGs): in early childhood studies led by Nirmala Rao, in higher education led by Yang Rui, and in shadow education led by myself. Nirmala Rao gave a keynote address at the World Congress on Early Childhood Care and Education co-sponsored by UNESCO and the City of Moscow in September 2010, which was subsequently published as a CERC Monograph (Rao & Sun 2010). She and her team undertook much work for UNICEF, particularly focusing on the Asia-Pacific Early Childhood Development Scale. This work required visits to such countries as Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Vanuatu. In related work, under the CERC umbrella, Nirmala Rao led a team which included colleagues from the HKU Faculty of Medicine and made inputs to the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom government (Rao et al. 2014).

The higher education SIG also had many achievements, working in conjunction with the Community for Higher Education Research (CHER) network in the Faculty of Education led by Anatoly Oleksiyenko and Bruce Macfarlane. Among other ventures, Yang Rui and Anatoly Oleksiyenko focused on BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and co-edited a special issue of the journal *Frontiers of Education in China* of which Yang Rui had in 2011 become co-editor with Zha Qiang of York University, Canada (Oleksiyenko & Yang 2015). Anatoly Oleksiyenko, born in Ukraine and a fluent speaker of Russian, brought to CERC a distinctive flavour and included in his portfolio valuable comparisons of China and Russia (e.g.

Oleksiyenko 2014) which echoed earlier work published by CERC (Borevskaya, Borisenkov & Zhu 2010).

The shadow education SIG was especially exciting to me, and was a group to which I devoted much effort. In 2011 shadow education was designated a Faculty Research Theme, which gave it recognition. The SIG comprised academic staff, research students, MEd students and a few undergraduates, and met regularly for mutual support and exchange of insights from research. Zhang Wei was the first PhD student in this group, commencing in October 2010. She completed her thesis on shadow education in Chongqing, China, three years later (Zhang 2013), and then became a Postdoctoral Fellow (PDF) and CERC Secretary in 2014 following Emily Mang's move to HKU-SPACE after a tenure in CERC of 17 years. Zhang Wei was in due course joined by PhD students focusing on shadow education in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Georgia, and Hong Kong;<sup>2</sup> and nine MEd students completed dissertations on the theme between 2011 and 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Another part of the shadow education work was carried by collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). It commenced with a consultancy assignment to assist with staff development, and moved to a monograph about shadow education (Bray & Lykins 2012). The next step was a Policy Forum on the IIEP model, hosted by CERC in April 2013 in partnership with ADB and UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. Entitled *Regulating the Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and Government Policies in Asia*, the Policy Forum brought together 33 researchers, government personnel, practitioners and other stakeholders. Alongside participants from Hong Kong and neighbouring Macao and Mainland China were visitors from India, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam and Uzbekistan. Several participants from Mainland China were so enthusiastic that they encouraged CERC to run a sequel specifically for operators of tutoring centres in different parts of China. The lead for this June 2013 event was taken by Li Wenjian, a PhD student with much practical tutoring experience, in collaboration with

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<sup>2</sup> These students were Rafsan Mahmud (Bangladesh), William Brehm (Cambodia), Li Wenjian and Liu Junyan (China), Nutsa Kobakhidze (Georgia), and Kevin Yung (Hong Kong).

<sup>3</sup> They were Bai Yanzhao, Claudia Chan, Larry Kong, Sulata Maheshwari, Edlyn Ong, Yang Dan, William Yip, Kelsey Zhang and Thea Zhang.

Larry Kong who was an MEd student working as a tutor in Guangzhou. Inputs from this pair of Policy Forums contributed to a CERC monograph (Bray & Kwo 2014) which was produced with the support of HKU Knowledge Exchange funds, and then translated into Chinese and Korean.



First Policy Forum on Shadow Education, April 2013

## The UNESCO Chair

Another milestone was the granting in May 2012 of the UNESCO Chair in Comparative Education, which was built from and maintained my connections with IIEP and other parts of UNESCO. The system of UNESCO Chairs was established to cover all domains of UNESCO's work, i.e. including Education, Science and Culture. UNESCO (2009, p.2) sees the value of Chairs:

- as 'think tanks' and 'bridge builders' between the academic world, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making;
- in strengthening North-South, South-South and North-South-South cooperation; and
- in creating poles of excellence and innovation at the regional or subregional level.

These objectives dovetailed well with the mission statements of HKU and the Faculty of Education, and shortly after my return from IIEP I engaged in discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of the Faculty of Education which led to a proposal. The application for the Chair had to be routed through the UNESCO National Commission which is located within the Ministry of Education in Beijing. This required some sounding out, to see how Beijing would view the Chair in Hong Kong. I was glad to find a positive reception, even though the Chair was located in Hong Kong rather than Mainland China and would, at least in the first instance, be held by a non-Chinese. We also gained support from the UNESCO Cluster Office in Beijing and the UNESCO's regional bureau in Bangkok.

Since the UNESCO Chairs are established by agreement between the University's Vice-Chancellor and the UNESCO Director-General, the proposal for the Chair was transmitted by Tsui Lap Chee, the HKU Vice-Chancellor, via the UNESCO National Commission in Beijing. The proposal was evaluated in Paris, and the feedback transmitted along the same route. The feedback recognised HKU's strengths in comparative education, which included CERC and its reputation, and indicated that the training component should be elaborated alongside the research. The revised proposal submitted in February 2011 was sufficiently convincing, and approved in March 2012. The Chair was launched in HKU's Rayson Huang Lecture in May 2012. The event was



Launching the UNESCO Chair in Comparative Education, 2012 (L-R: Mark Bray, Roland Chin, Stephen Andrews, Tang Qian, David Atchoarena, Mitzi Leung)

attended on the UNESCO side by Tang Qian, Assistant Director-General for Education, and David Atchoarena, Director of the Division for Teacher Development and Higher Education. Partnering with us in the event were colleagues from the UNESCO Hong Kong Association, which had strong links with local schools and counterpart bodies in Mainland China.

At the beginning of 2013, CERC and the UNESCO Chair hosted a one-week workshop as part of the blended (distance and face-to-face) Education Sector Planning course run by IIEP. It was attended by 73 planners and managers from Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, with financial support from JP Morgan in a form of public-private partnership. Follow-up work with them has included focus on shadow education using the Vietnamese translation of the Bray and Lykins (2012) book.

The UNESCO Chair also provided a framework to secure funds for two PDF positions for work on shadow education. The first position was initially taken by Zhan Shengli, joining CERC from Shanghai. She brought strong quantitative skills which particularly contributed to a Hong Kong project funded by the General Research Fund of the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (see e.g. Zhan et al. 2013). She also joined me and Ora Kwo in a consultancy project in Dubai about shadow education, and investigated aspects of shadow education in Taiwan (Zhan 2014). Following Zhan Shengli's return to Shanghai, remaining funds from that post permitted employment of Zhang Wei on a part-time basis as PDF, with the other part coming from CERC funds to work as CERC Secretary.

The other PDF post was first held by Rattana Lao, from Thailand, who published one of the first studies in English about shadow education in that country (Lao 2014). Subsequently the post was taken by Abbas Madandar Arani from Iran. His previous links with CERC had included translation into Farsi of a book emerging from the 2001 World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (Bray 2003b) and the CERC book *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007). Abbas Madandar Arani brought a very different voice from a country which had not been known well by many CERC members.

## **The Expanding Student Body**

Earlier chapters in this book have charted the launch of the MEd specialisation in Comparative Education (CE) in 1996, and its transition in 2008 to Comparative and International Education and Development (CIED). In 2011, Yang Rui and I decided to take it one stage further by making it Comparative and Global Studies in Education and Development (CGSED). Our rationale was that globalisation had become a major meta-narrative, and that the broadened focus would further increase its attractiveness. The adjusted orientation also matched the goals of the UNESCO Chair, with its global focus on issues of EFA and ESD.

The new MEd specialisation was launched in September 2011 with 19 students from a wide range of nationalities. Half of the students took the course on a full-time basis over 12 months, while the other half took it on a part-time basis over 24 months. The established framework was for a biennial intake, and another 21 students began in 2013. In addition to five from Hong Kong, they included nine from Mainland China, two from the United Kingdom, and one each from Australia, Cambodia, Nepal, Philippines and the USA. In 2014 the Faculty recognised the strength of demand and permitted an annual intake. The next intake of 18 students again had much diversity, ranging from Azerbaijan to Uruguay.



2013 Cohort of MEd students in CGSED



CERC provided significant support to the MEd programme, and in turn the programme brought a population much interested in CERC activities. Demand is clearly remaining strong, and the annual intake permits potential applicants around the world to know that the programme is available each year.

Alongside the CGSED programme were of course other specialisations that stressed comparative perspectives. This was particularly the case in the higher education specialism coordinated by Anatoly Oleksiyenko. And alongside the MEd students were many research students, both in the Faculty of Education and elsewhere in the University, who contributed significantly to the CERC community.

## **Future Directions**

CERC has shown itself to be a robust body which leads and changes with the times. Its most important resource over the decades has been the commitment of core groups of people. The fact that CERC has had five Directors (and various Acting Directors) shows that its institutional identity can be sustained across changes of leadership. At the same time, CERC has kept an eye on future generations. CERC's Management Committee brings together junior as well as senior colleagues as a way not only to harness talents and diversity but also as an investment in junior personnel who will in due course become middle-ranking and then senior.

The rise of the internet has brought different balances. As noted in the chapter by Lee Wing On, early uses of the internet placed CERC at the forefront of the field. Like other bodies, CERC finds that in the contemporary era much information is sought and provided over the internet. The CERC website has reduced the importance of *CERCular* in paper form, and the fact that CERC books are available electronically both increases their accessibility and reduces the need for paper. Nevertheless, paper retains an important role, not only in serving older generations who still prefer physical books to computers, but also in retaining information that could easily disappear in the electronic era.

The last two decades have shown CERC's ability indeed to be a Centre—not only within the Faculty of Education but also within the profession at local, regional and international levels. CERC's reputation and impact are spread not only by its publications, but also by its alumni

and members of the professoriate who have moved to other institutions. CERC has acquired a regional and global community profile from its partnerships with professional bodies and particularly with the CESHK, CESA, CIES and WCCES, and we look forward to its continuing contributions in the decades to come.

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## 8

### CERC

### An Intellectual Field in Microcosm

*Maria MANZON*

This book has presented histories of the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) in its first two decades of life. These histories are narrated by each of CERC's Directors and are couched within their personal biographies and the internal sociology of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and its Faculty of Education, which are in turn embedded within domestic politics and the (evolving) position of Hong Kong and its universities within the region and internationally. The narratives attest to the robustness of the Centre with its numerous achievements and international prestige, while noting various challenges. This concluding chapter offers a sociological commentary on the role of a research centre in the institutional and intellectual construction of the field of comparative education, taking CERC as the unit for analysis.

As I have argued elsewhere (Manzon 2011), the field of comparative education exemplifies the characteristics of an intellectual field as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1969, 1984a, 1984b). My earlier work on this theme took the professional societies of comparative education and university programmes as the units for analysis. This chapter shows that a research centre like CERC can also be viewed as an intellectual field in microcosm.

The chapter will first restate the conceptual lenses to be employed in this sociological commentary. These lenses will then be applied to an analysis of the historical evolution of CERC as a form of social practice. The third section will map a possible future trajectory for the Centre. A final section will identify the implications of this analysis for an understanding of the wider field of comparative education.

## Dynamics of an Intellectual Field

First, let me recapitulate the key ideas (explained in chapter 1) to be employed in this sociological analysis. One is the ‘logic of practice’ which interprets any social practice as a result of a triadic interaction among *habitus*, *capital* and *field* (Bourdieu 1984a, p.101). Thus scholarly practices are generated in and by encounters between the *habitus* of scholars and the constraints, demands and opportunities of the social *field* to which their *habitus* is appropriate. Practices come forth—a change in practices comes about—by a less than conscious process of adjustment of the *habitus* and practices of individuals to the objective and external constraints of the social world. The field, however, has its own logic, politics, and structure as well as its observed hierarchy of acceptable currencies of capital. The internal logic of the field refracts external influences such as economic and political events (Bourdieu 1969). The field thus enjoys relative autonomy from external forces and serves as a mediating context between the external field and individual and institutional practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p.105).

Bourdieu further argues that an intellectual field is dynamically constructed by the interactions of occupants within a “system of positions and oppositions” (1969, p.109), which compete for symbolic power—the capacity to name, categorise, and define legitimate forms of knowledge production (Delanty 2001). This “law of the search for distinction” gives dynamism to the field, and implies that competition between intellectuals and their social groupings will be especially intense for those holding neighbouring positions in the field (Bourdieu 1984b, p.30).

This set of observations may be linked to the other key concept (also explained in chapter 1) which will be used here: academic tribes and territories (Becher & Trowler 2001). ‘Academic tribes’ refer to the sociological features of academic communities which are shaped partly by the members of those communities and partly by institutional structures—universities which placed them in faculties, departments, centres or other units. ‘Academic territories’ refer to the epistemological characteristics, i.e. the ideas on which the academics focus, including subject matter, methods, and modes of discourse.

Applying these lenses to the present theme, the forms of social practice of comparative education may vary depending on a scholar’s

philosophy of knowing and doing comparative education (*habitus*) and his/her possession of different levels of cultural, economic and social capital as recognised within a particular social field (e.g. university, professional society, research centre at the local, regional, and international levels). More specifically, a research centre such as CERC, viewed as an intellectual field, is structured by objective social forces (institutional, macro-social and political contexts) and the dynamic interactions of the academic tribes which are positioned unequally in the field. Neighbouring tribes compete with each other in the quest for distinction, for the symbolic power to define and act legitimately in the production of scholarly goods and consequent command over resources for more knowledge production. This tribal competition for symbolic capital is a form of exercise of power to secure title and recognition to one's own territory and to advance its boundaries, either by opposition—leading to fragmentation and splintering of fields—or by 'merger and acquisition'<sup>1</sup>—leading to territorial expansion. It resonates with literature on disciplinary institutionalisation in which emerging disciplines or fields seek to distinguish themselves from amateur explanations of the object of study, as well as from older, more established neighbouring disciplines (see e.g. Clark 1987 on scholarly societies in higher education; Wagner & Wittrock 1991 on the social sciences; Lambert 2003 on history).

### **CERC'S Logic of Practice**

The formation and development of CERC can be analysed as a form of social practice which is influenced by the interplay among *habitus*, capital and field. In this respect, the four guiding questions which have served as a backbone for the CERC Directors' discourses in the preceding chapters correspond with the four elements in this analytical framework. The questions are:

- **Q1:** How did you come to identify with the field of comparative education? (*Personal biography*)

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<sup>1</sup> 'Merger and acquisition' is a term in corporate finance used to refer to the consolidation of companies. A merger involves the combination of two companies, while an acquisition is the purchase of one company by another in which no new company is formed (Investopedia 2015).

- **Q2:** How has CERC developed during the last two decades? (*Developments/achievements*)
- **Q3:** How has CERC's embedded position in HKU and in the Faculty influenced its role? (*Embeddedness*)
- **Q4:** What future directions do you envisage for CERC? (*Future plans*)

Mapping these questions onto Bourdieu's (1984a, p.101) formula for the logic of practice, the social practice of CERC in the past (Q2) and possibly in the future (Q4) can be explained as the result of the triadic interaction between the respective Directors' habitus and capital (Q1) and the field in question, be it the Faculty of Education, HKU, the comparative education societies, etc. (Q3):

$$\{(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})\} + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

$$\mathbf{Q1} + \mathbf{Q3} = \mathbf{Q2, Q4}$$

The element of time is also important. Each era of CERC's history has operated within objective macro-political and macro-social contexts which have changed over time. Thus the formula above would look like this after incorporating the temporal dimension:

$\{(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})\} + \text{field} = \text{practice}$	$\{(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})\} + \text{field} = \text{practice}$
Time 1	Time 2, etc.

### *Foundational Era and Pre-1997 Handover*

Transposing these considerations to the narratives in this book, the first era to be examined is the foundational period surrounding the establishment of CERC in 1994 as a new social practice or intellectual field in the Faculty of Education of HKU. CERC's institutionalisation can mainly be attributed to two scholars: Lee Wing On and Mark Bray (see chapter 2). Lee was originally trained in Sinology, which he read through Western lenses at HKU, and was introduced to comparative education in his PhD studies in England. Bray initially entered the field through international education or development studies through his teaching in Africa and subsequent postgraduate work in African Studies



at Edinburgh under the direction of Kenneth King.<sup>2</sup> Both Lee and Bray identified themselves with the comparative education tribe. They attended their first World Congress of Comparative Education Societies in Prague in 1992, and subsequently have been part of the leadership of comparative education societies at the local, regional and global spheres. This can be viewed as valuable social capital for the field; and in terms of their *habitus*, both had a disposition towards comparative education in their teaching and research. Moreover, their cultural and social capital came to be recognised within the social field of HKU and, more specifically, its Faculty of Education.

Taking a Bourdieuan lens, the scholarly practice of comparative education was generated in and by the encounter between the *habitus* principally of these two scholars and the opportunities of the social *field*—the Faculty, HKU, and Hong Kong—to which their *habitus* and capital were appropriate and valued. The first Executive Committee meeting of CERC (then called Centre for Comparative Research in Regional and International Education [CCRRIE]) in November 1994 tabled a proposal outlining the aims and functions of the incipient Centre. The discourse on the proposed functions was somewhat different from the aims that later came to define CERC and are still current. It reflected the societal discourses facing Hong Kong, as a territory that would revert from colonial to Chinese administration three years later. The first proposed function (CCRRIE 1994, p.1) was:

To initiate regional research in education on topics and issues relating to Hong Kong, South-East Asia, and East Asia (known as the “Region”).

The document then mentioned the need

to anticipate post-1997<sup>3</sup> needs by establishing a database and common research interests with the People’s Republic of China,

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson (1994) distinguished international from comparative education by its melioristic/applied purpose. Development studies and development education focused on so-called developing (i.e. low-income) countries (Parkyn 1977). See also Little (2010).

<sup>3</sup> The theme of CERC’s inaugural international symposium in May 1995, ‘Education and Socio-Political Transitions in Asia’, was evocative of this outlook, as was the first pair of books in the CERC Studies in Comparative Education Series (Lee & Bray 1997; Bray & Lee 1997).

but self-sufficiency in curriculum development, delivery systems and associated values. (...) The Centre would be well-placed to maintain Hong Kong's links both with developments in education in the West, and with Mainland China.

The foundational documents of CERC reveal the identity with which the actors viewed themselves and the role of the Centre. The documents had been prepared during that concrete historical moment in the life of Hong Kong and within the concrete institutional context of HKU, which was the first and at that time the only English-medium university (yet also able to function in Chinese) in Hong Kong. HKU was then strategically poised as a scholarly location that gave access to ideas from both East and West. These ideas were not exported and imported passively through HKU. Rather, the University provided—given its bilingual and bicultural competencies—a hermeneutic function, enabling the West to get to know and understand China, and China to get to know and understand the West.

CERC, being embedded within Hong Kong and in HKU in particular, found its unique position to deal with the cross-cultural trade of educational ideas. This was proposed as the second function of the then CCRRIE: “To maintain a clearing house<sup>4</sup> of educational data bearing on the Region, and of publications arising from such work” (CCRRIE 1994, p.2). CERC however was not a mere clearing house of ideas. It interpreted and synthesised<sup>5</sup> educational ideas cross-culturally, and served as a bridge between China and the West. Lee and Bray elucidated this in their accounts (see chapters 2 and 3), concretely with the publication of *The Chinese Learner* (Watkins & Biggs 1996), as the Centre's first book publication, and *Education in China and Abroad* (Gu 2001), and Bray did so in his remarks about the bridging role with China as Assistant Secretary General of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). The unique role that the Centre played was also recognised by international scholars. One example was by Joseph Farrell (1999, p.545) of the University of Toronto, reviewing the book by Noah & Eckstein (1998), who lauded

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<sup>4</sup> A clearing house is an agency or organisation which collects and distributes something, especially information.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Synthesis’ is used here in the philosophical sense of Hegelian dialectics to refer to a higher stage of truth reached by combining the truth of a thesis and an antithesis.

CERC as “one of the newest and strongest intellectual centres of the world”. He added that:

The Centre seems a place where many of the tensions and intellectual conflicts between what we have traditionally labelled as east and west, developed and underdeveloped, left and right are coming together in a ferment that may produce some very new and different ways of understanding and carrying on our professional business.

The preceding paragraphs have elucidated the macro-societal context of Hong Kong as refracted in the social field of HKU and the Faculty of Education. The theme may be elaborated with remarks on how the scholarly practice of CERC was generated in and by the encounter between the *habitus* of the founding actors of CERC and the demands and opportunities afforded by the socio-political context of Hong Kong in the early 1990s as it was translated into the discourses of the University and the Faculty.

As narrated by Lee Wing On in his chapter:

The climate at the University level became favourable at the beginning of 1994, when the authorities distributed a document about Centres of Academic Activity. These were to be virtual centres, requiring no additional resources but serving as pools for drawing existing research expertise together and attracting sponsorship and funding. In his role of Head of Department, Mark Bray reinvigorated the proposal at the Faculty Board in its April 1994 meeting. The Faculty Board formally endorsed the proposal, and sent it on to the Senate which approved it in May 1994. The last step was the University Council, which approved the proposal in June 1994.

The above is a classic example of how a social practice is generated. The agency of two scholars, one of whom had the added social and symbolic capital of being a Head of Department, responded to the opportunity to establish the first virtual centre of HKU's Faculty of Education and started to form the comparative education tribe within the social field of the Faculty. Certainly, the foundation of the Centre was not solely the work of Lee and Bray. The 1989 pre-history proposal for a research centre engaged in regional and comparative studies in education was initiated by their Faculty colleagues, led by John Biggs,

who were engaged in IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) studies at the Hong Kong IEA Centre based in HKU's Department of Education. Nevertheless, the move to resurrect the idea of a comparative studies centre in 1994 upon the initiative of Bray and Lee and with the support of colleagues who later became members of the Executive Committee<sup>6</sup> proved opportune and in line with HKU's thrust to promote virtual research centres. Thus CERC was born.

The initial name of CERC, i.e. Centre for Comparative Research in Regional and International Education (CCRRIE), partly reflected the desire to serve colleagues from the IEA tribe (see chapter 1). In 1995, CRRRIE was renamed the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) to provide an acronym that was easier to pronounce and to reflect the embrative goal. As Lee remarked, "we had established it [CERC] for the whole Faculty of Education".

The first strategy of CERC's founders was to create a sense of social ('tribal') identity, foster communication among members, and raise awareness of the existence of the new group. This goal was partly achieved through the publication of a newsletter, *CERCular*. A list of publications of Faculty colleagues who were directly or indirectly engaged in comparative studies was circulated through the *CERCular*. Lee explained (see chapter 2):

We looked for comparative elements in the publications of our Faculty colleagues, i.e., whether they were related to issues beyond Hong Kong, or whether they were looking at certain practices in other countries, or even undertaking an international review of a topic. We realised that many people were related to comparative education in one way or another.

This offers an interesting case to illustrate the apparent contradictions and tensions between the sociological and epistemological dimensions (Becher & Trowler 2001) of comparative education as a field of study. Lee's embrative definition of comparative

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<sup>6</sup> They were Cheng Kai Ming, Keith Johnson, Frederick Leung and Paul Morris (see chapter 2).

education<sup>7</sup>—which contrasts with narrower definitions (see e.g. Gu 2001; Epstein 1994; Olivera 2009)—was translated sociologically in his action, as CERC's first Director, to involve as many colleagues as possible in the newly-demarcated territory. Thus the Centre began in October 1994 with 36 self-nominated members, 18 of whom were from the Department of Education, 14 from the Department of Curriculum Studies, and four from other parts of the University (see chapter 1). Nevertheless, such an all-embracing territory which englobes 'incongruous' sub-tribes is bound to pose challenges and tribal tensions. As Bray (2004, p.10) observed for comparative education societies around the world, a range of identities may be found and not all members are greatly interested in methodological debates and about the history of the field. Each member possesses distinct habitus and forms of capital, and is therefore positioned differently within the field. A similar observation holds true for CERC's territory which is characterised by a fluidity of boundaries and a diversity of members. In this respect, CERC reflects the field of comparative education in microcosm, as indicated by ongoing debates on its broad or narrow definitions (see e.g. Mason's chapter; also chapter 5 of Manzon 2011) and the empirical data on its contours (Cook, Hite & Epstein 2004). The field, like CERC, is heterogeneous, inclusive, and not always explicitly comparative in content, membership or purposes (Manzon 2011, p.124).

It is therefore not surprising that, following the intellectual field's law of the quest for distinction, some tribes inhabiting the comparative education territory opt to maintain dual (or multiple) citizenship and even subsequently decide to migrate and establish residency in new territories in which they can claim full title under their name, play out their true identity, and avail of the new territories' resources in order to yield their own knowledge products. In this way, they can receive due recognition and have more symbolic power, i.e. the capacity to name, categorise, and define legitimate forms of knowledge production (Delanty 2001). As mentioned above, this law of the search for distinction gives dynamism to the field and implies that competition between intellectuals and their social groupings will be especially intense for those holding neighbouring positions in the territory

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<sup>7</sup> Lee continued to use this term (e.g. two decades later) to describe an inherent attitude and spirit of the field of comparative education and its institutional structures (Lee, Napier & Manzon 2014).

(Bourdieu 1984b, p.30). Transposing these considerations to CERC, it was the first virtual centre set up in HKU's Faculty of Education in 1994. Five years later, the Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China (CREC) was established as the second virtual centre in the Faculty, with an explicit focus on education policy in China. As at January 2015, the Faculty had eight research centres. The splintering and fragmentation of scholarly networks reflects patterns in the wider academic field (see e.g. Masemann, Bray & Manzon 2007). As Clark (1987, p.238) observed, there is an "ongoing contest between centrifugal and centripetal academic forces, paving the way for further subdivisions along subject-matter lines".

Shifting to the other forms of social practice during the early years of CERC, some considerations regarding a field of study are apposite. According to Klein (1990), a field's presence and importance are largely shaped by its relative visibility, which may take at least two forms. One is the overt form of interdisciplinary institutions (e.g. a research centre) and/or interdisciplinary graduate programmes. The other embraces less overt forms for interdisciplinary dialogue such as study groups, symposia, conferences, and publications. All these forms have been and/or are present in CERC's knowledge products. Of these, two forms are highlighted in chapter three: the MEd programme and CERC's publications.

Bray recorded the launch of the MEd specialism in Comparative Education at HKU in 1996. It was a two-year part-time programme in the standard mode for MEd degrees, with modules on comparative education methodology, education policy, curriculum, economics and financing of education viewed in comparative perspective. The MEd course graduated three cohorts (1998, 2001, 2003) and provided new vitality to CERC's membership with students who possessed the *habitus* and cultural capital to inhabit the territory and contribute to widening its frontiers.

Another major knowledge product which has made CERC internationally visible, alongside seminars, symposia, and research students, is its strong output of publications. The series CERC Studies in Comparative Education is especially notable. A deliberate strategy from the outset was inclusion of works of CERC visitors who were well known in the field and whose books added considerable prestige and visibility (e.g. Altbach 1998; Noah & Eckstein 1998; Postlethwaite 1999). This social practice was highly influenced by the cultural and

social capital of CERC's Directors—who exercised editorial leadership—and its unique position in the regional and international field of scholarship as an English-medium book series that provides a platform for Western scholars to reach an East Asian readership, and for Asian voices (e.g. Gu 2001) to reach a Western audience.

Particularly noteworthy is Volume 19 in the CERC/Springer series, *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007), produced in a second edition in 2014. This book has been translated into eight languages (see Mark Mason's chapter), and is used in courses of comparative education in all continents of the world. The editors made a conscious effort to produce a book that was globally relevant but at the same time to assert Asian voices associated with the Centre.

Publication initiatives further expanded as a result of synergies and the social capital of CERC's Directors, who were also keen to support CERC by bringing in economic capital through various initiatives including consultancy work (see chapters 2 and 3). The Education in Developing Asia series (in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank [ADB]) came from the work on which Bray had embarked with ADB in 1997. Bray brought in Lee Wing On, and they collaborated with David Chapman and Don Adams under the umbrella of the Academy for Educational Development in Washington DC and UNESCO's Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. David Chapman guest-edited a special issue of the *International Journal of Educational Research* in 1998, drawing on Bray and Lee's individual reports and the seminar they had held in ADB (Chapman 1998).<sup>8</sup> Bray requested permission to publish the booklets separately at that time, but due to administrative delays publication was only achieved in 2002 (see e.g. Bray 2002; Lee 2002), at which time Bob Adamson was Director. Likewise, the CERC Monograph series was launched with the publication of Yoko Yamato's MEd dissertation (Yamato 2003) as a fruit of collaborative work with Mark Bray, her MEd dissertation supervisor.

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<sup>8</sup> During the following decade, Gerard Postiglione also worked with David Chapman. Their book, in which William Cummings was a third co-editor, won the 2011 Best Book award from the Higher Education Special Interest Group of the Comparative and International Education Society (Chapman, Cummings & Postiglione 2010).

Chinese translations of several CERC publications were also undertaken to enhance circulation to the Chinese-speaking world. One example, mentioned in chapter 3, was the book *Education and Society in Hong Kong and Macau* (Bray & Koo 1999). It was first published in English in 1999 and in Chinese in 2002, and then in second edition in English in 2004, in Chinese traditional characters in 2005 and in Chinese simplified characters in 2006. Another example was *Mono-graph No.2* (Bray, Ding & Huang 2004), which resulted from a consultancy project in China's Gansu Province for the United Kingdom government's Department for International Development (DFID). The Chinese translation was in simplified characters for distribution in Mainland China.

### *Post-Foundational Era to the Present*

CERC grew steadily after the post-foundational era under the brief leadership of Bob Adamson (2002), succeeded by Mark Mason (2002-2008), Yang Rui (2008-2010), and by Mark Bray after his return from UNESCO (2010 to present). The different emphases in the social practices of CERC during their respective eras make an interesting case for analysis following Bourdieu's logic of practice. This section takes the second box in the formula explained at the beginning of this chapter, changing the denominator to Time 2, Time 3, and so forth.

Bob Adamson came from a strong (foreign) languages background with a first degree in French and training in teaching English as a foreign language and cross-cultural experience as a teacher in China and France. This cultural capital in 'things foreign' together with the "unconscious comparative education" habitus "in him" were awakened through conversations with Mark Bray after he joined HKU in 1995 (see chapter 4). Interestingly, he remarked:

[I] also presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Comparative Education Societies in South Korea in 2001, by which time I considered myself a fully-fledged comparative educationalist — although I was not completely sure what that term actually signified. In response to this uncertainty in my mind—and finding no satisfactory answer in the available literature—I had the idea of compiling a book about comparative education research, one that set out what a comparative educationalist is and does.



This experience, which is common to most members of the comparative education tribe around the world, once more illustrates the tension between the sociological (tribal identity) and epistemological dimensions (territorial grasp) of a field of study. This search to define his own comparative identity led Adamson to plant the seed of what became CERC's international best-seller (Bray, Adamson & Mason 2007, 2014), representing a knowledge product and a social practice which has epistemological significance in defining CERC's own identity as an authority in comparative methodology in education. As indicated, all contributors were either CERC members or in some way associated with the Centre.

Moving on to 'Time 3' under Mark Mason, CERC took a 'development turn', owing to Mason's habitus formed in Apartheid South Africa where he

became increasingly involved in activist education politics: working with teachers across the racialised education system to the ultimate end of bringing about the collapse of Apartheid education and, with it, the Apartheid state.

Like Adamson, Mason was unaware of the 'comparative education cum educational development' habitus that was in him until a conversation shortly after his arrival in HKU in 1998. As he recalled in chapter five:

While I was not yet aware of the close association in the academic domain of the fields of comparative education, international education, and educational development, Mark [Bray] certainly was, and saw CERC as a natural home for me well before I realised it. Thus was my entry into the field of comparative education through education development—albeit by another name.

Mason's work in educational development as well as his training in philosophy, language and mathematics (cultural capital) and his interest in concepts, discourse, scholarship and publication (habitus) clearly defined the thrust of his Directorship of CERC and were translated into specific knowledge products with distinct 'development' imprint. Both involved the renaming in 2008 of some of its knowledge products. One was the MEd specialism, renamed and refocused from 'Comparative Education' to 'Comparative and International Education and Development'. The other was the CERC Monograph Series,

renamed as the CERC Monograph Series in Comparative and International Education and Development. Monograph 5 was co-published with the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES)—another domain of Mark Mason’s social capital—and focused on education, aid and development in the context of the international Education for All (EFA) agenda (Chisholm, Bloch & Fleisch 2008). Once more, these phenomena resonate with Bourdieu’s intellectual field theory illustrating the exercise of legitimate cognitive power to define the domains of the intellectual field (Bourdieu 1975).

Yang Rui succeeded Mark Mason as CERC Director in 2008. He was educated in comparative education in China, Hong Kong, and Australia. He defines his tribal identity as “a researcher in comparative education”. Like Lee Wing On, Yang experienced the powerful transformative lenses of comparative education in viewing the world and in enhancing his understanding of his own society:

The interesting thing is that I wrote about education in other countries when I was within the Chinese Mainland, but almost exclusively about Chinese education while I was (and still am) outside the Mainland. This in itself is telling of how comparative education is perceived and practiced depending on one’s location in the world.

Yang brought his distinctive Chinese lens to bear on CERC’s works. One example is his role in organising a special issue of *Comparative Education* on conducting educational research on Confucian Heritage Cultures which gathered mostly the works of CERC members (Evers, King & Katyal 2011; Yang 2011).

Mark Bray as Director came full circle when he was re-elected in 2010 after his return from Paris. His experience as Director of UNESCO’s Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) not only enhanced his social capital but also cultivated more deeply his habitus of *doing* comparative education, i.e. with an emphasis on the applied purpose of research. IIEP has also provided international visibility and uptake of his research in shadow education, leading to more consultancy work and related publications. Both enhanced habitus and enlarged forms of capital were valuable in the changed social field of HKU. The

University's new emphasis on Knowledge Exchange<sup>9</sup> resonated well with the applied dimension of comparative education as well as with Bray's extensive global networks. He was able to secure annual HKU Knowledge Exchange funding for publication and dissemination through CERC four times from 2010 onwards. The encounter of habitus and the field's opportunities and demands generated new social practices in CERC.

One illustrative case is the 2010 formation of a Special Interest Group (SIG) on Shadow Education, the focus of which was subsequently (2011) designated a Faculty Research Theme.<sup>10</sup> The SIG resembles what Crane (1972) called an 'invisible college' linking collaborators within the same research area. It brought together over 20 researchers, including six PhD students and nine MEd students from a wide variety of countries (see chapter 7). Bray introduced an IIEP social practice to CERC, as he narrated in his chapter. This was the pair of 2013 Policy Forums on regulating shadow education. They led to a CERC monograph (Bray & Kwo 2014) which was produced with the support of HKU Knowledge Exchange funds, bringing added economic capital to the Centre.

Another highlight of this period was the granting in May 2012 of the UNESCO Chair in Comparative Education to HKU. Mark Bray became the first Chairholder, and the granting attested to his social capital with the IIEP and UNESCO affiliates. The UNESCO Chair provided symbolic capital internationally and at the Faculty and University levels, and also provided a mechanism to secure economic capital with various grants including funds for two postdoctoral

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<sup>9</sup> Knowledge Exchange (KE) was formulated as one of the three pillars, together with Teaching and Research, which underpinned all activities of HKU. The University defined KE as "engaging, for mutual benefit, with business, government or the public to generate, acquire, apply and make accessible the knowledge needed to enhance material, human, social, cultural and environmental well-being" (HKU 2015a).

<sup>10</sup> The Faculty Research Themes, as explained on the Faculty of Education website, "offer the possibility for interdisciplinary research collaboration across Divisions and beyond Centres, and incorporate work with staff from other Faculties, for the enhancement of research in relatively new areas or the consolidation of research strength in areas which can be further developed into a higher level" (HKU 2015b).

fellowships for work on shadow education.

A final case in point is the further renaming of the MEd specialism, this time from 'Comparative and International Education and Development (CIED)' to 'Comparative and Global Studies in Education and Development (CGSED)'. In chapter seven, Bray explained the reason for this change, reporting on discussions with Yang Rui:

Our rationale was that globalisation had become a major meta-narrative, and that the broadened focus would further increase its attractiveness. The adjusted orientation also matched the goals of the UNESCO Chair, with its global focus on issues of EFA and ESD [Education for Sustainable Development].

This strategic shift depicted clearly the interaction of *habitus* (Yang's teaching and research on globalisation, and Bray's UNESCO identity and links), social networking, and the demands and opportunities afforded by a changed and highly internationalised profile of MEd candidates. This echoed what Bourdieu (1969) posited as a change in social practice which comes about by a less than conscious process of adjustment of the *habitus* and practices of individuals to the objective and external constraints of the social world.

The above discussion has demonstrated that CERC is a heavy-weight in its accomplishments albeit light in its fuselage. Continuity across different eras has prevailed with noteworthy enhancements in practice as a result of the interplay among different strengths and orientations of the leaders and members, the territory of ideas with which they worked, the interactions with neighbouring territories, and the mutation of the external institutional and macro-societal contexts at the local, regional and global levels.<sup>11</sup> As an institutional actor in the intellectual field, CERC has managed to achieve distinction locally and internationally through the rich reserve of social and cultural capital of its leaders and members, its prestigious publications, its high visibility

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<sup>11</sup> This continuity amidst diversity over time is depicted by the cover design of this book, portraying intersecting hexagons in five colours to represent the five CERC Directors. Each main hexagon is surrounded by smaller hexagons of a similar colour, some of which intersect with the main figure (referring to sub-tribes working in related fields which align with CERC), while others are outliers (pointing to sub-tribes which splintered away from the main tribe but which show some similarity to the comparative education tribe).

in professional societies of comparative education, and its impact on local and international policy agendas.

## Changing Times, Changing Territories

After having reviewed the historical evolution of CERC under the prism of the logic of practice, this penultimate section is forward looking. What will CERC look like in 10, 20, or 30 years? A related and equally challenging question is: What will Hong Kong (and HKU, and education in Hong Kong) look like in 10, 20, or 30 years? On 30 June 2047, the 50-year term for the ‘one country, two systems’ formula will expire. The implications for Hong Kong and HKU cannot yet be answered. I will therefore limit this discussion to insights based on a comparison of the CERC Directors’ visions of the Centre’s future and its social ecology, adding my own views, and how it should prepare itself to shift gear.

At the macro-political and societal level, a major transformation that has occurred (and which has had an indirect impact on CERC) is the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese administration in 1997. The rapid rise of China as a global power and its enviable human talent is remaking the world in both economic and scholarly terms (see Yang Rui’s chapter). The Shanghai-Hong Kong stock connect scheme was effected in November 2014, together with Hong Kong’s scrapping of restrictions on renminbi conversion.<sup>12</sup> These developments are symbolic of the gradual integration of Hong Kong into the Mainland Chinese system. At the same time, top higher education institutions in Mainland China are becoming more internationalised, partly owing to the government’s soft diplomacy and the power of attraction of China’s strong economy. In the field of comparative education, Beijing Normal University (BNU), for example, offers an international PhD programme in comparative education in both English and Chinese streams. It is

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<sup>12</sup> The Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect is a pilot programme that links the stock markets in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Under the programme, investors in Hong Kong and Mainland China can trade and settle shares listed on the other market via the exchange and clearing house in their home market (HKEX 2015). To facilitate cross-border equity trading, Hong Kong’s cap on the conversion of the Hong Kong dollar into or out of the Chinese currency (renminbi) was scrapped (Noble 2014).

attracting international students with an added incentive of a full scholarship. The programme contemplates a joint co-supervision arrangement on the second year, where the PhD student will be based in a foreign university, on a fully-funded basis, to work with a comparative education scholar there. Singapore is considered ‘international’ in the eyes of BNU, thus I have a PhD student from BNU. She told me however that Hong Kong was not considered ‘international’ under BNU rules, and therefore students choosing a Hong Kong university would not receive any financial subsidy for their studies there.

This example aligns with the observations of Yang Rui (see chapter 6) on the multi-polarity of centres of scholarship characterising the contemporary world and similar patterns in the different periods of the history of comparative education (see also Manzon 2011, chapter 3). Yet the poles of attraction depend on one’s position in the social field in which the intellectual field is embedded. While China may be attracting international students to its premier universities and may not consider Hong Kong as ‘international’, Hong Kong remains ‘international’ in the eyes of students from many other parts of the world, as the enrolment in HKU’s *Med in Comparative and Global Studies in Education and Development* exemplifies.

Likewise, publication in the CERC Series of Comparative Education may be considered local in HKU’s eyes, but it is considered international by scholars based outside Hong Kong, especially with the co-publishing link with Springer (Bray 2015). It all depends on one’s location in the geopolitical world. How the territory will change over time will depend on how the tectonic plates shift and which territories lay on the active fault lines. CERC could maintain a lead in forming a “critical mass of non-Western scholarship [in the] ...reconsideration of traditional concepts and theories” (Yang Rui; see also Bob Adamson’s chapter). Yang thus defined CERC’s niche:

Located within China while maintaining fully connected with the global community, CERC could be safely expected to contribute much more with greater excitements.

Another major shift is the rise of the internet and the pervasive use of information technology in teaching, research and publications. This has made possible the access to huge amounts of data in any part of the world at the click of a mouse. Likewise international travel is more common and affordable. Related to this is the dominance of positivist

approaches to the evaluation of educational performance (e.g. OECD international benchmarking),<sup>13</sup> and of scholarship (what David Post [2012] termed as ‘rank scholarship’).

One of the impacts of these developments on the field is seen in the facility to access comparative education data by specialists and non-specialists and the increasing (and possibly indiscriminate) use by politicians of international benchmarks for their policy decisions. These patterns enhance awareness, but also have their own dangers. Scholars in the field of comparative education may need to strengthen their methodological contributions, highlighting the pitfalls of shallow comparison and stressing the value of comparative education tools at the service of the common good (see the chapters by Lee and Adamson). As economic discourses seek to dominate and shape society, the CERC community can continue to encourage comparative education to play not only a theoretical role but also a critical/emancipatory role (echoing two of the three cognitive interests of Habermas [1971]). In this respect, Bray, Adamson and Mason coincide in their recommendations for CERC to make strong contributions to new global initiatives associated with the Education for All (EFA) agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Reflections on Comparative Education

This book has explored the historical development of CERC in its first two decades of existence based on the narratives of its five Directors. In this concluding chapter, I have examined the dynamics of a research centre—CERC—as an intellectual field, reflecting the field of comparative education in microcosm. This final section integrates the insights from the analysis with my earlier work on the intellectual and institutional construction of comparative education which took comparative education societies and university programmes of comparative education as the units for analysis (Manzon 2011). In that book, I demonstrated (p.218) that the institutionalisation of comparative education—as professional societies and as university courses—was not purely the outcome of intellectual pursuits but also:

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<sup>13</sup> For a critical reading of the international benchmarking phenomenon, see e.g. Pereyra, Kotthoff and Cowen (2011) and Engel and Williams (2013).

of a complex interplay of sociological forces at the macro- and meso-structural level and micro-political interests of agents in the field, as well as the shaping force of contingent societal discourses.

This remark echoed Cowen's sociology-of-knowledge perspective on the institutionalisation of comparative education as shaped by the interplay of personal biography, the internal sociology of universities, and the national political work agenda vis-à-vis the geopolitical and domestic contexts (Cowen 1982, 2000, 2009). The above discussion has demonstrated, using Bourdieu's logic of practice, how CERC has been shaped not only by its leaders' variegated numerators but also by its embeddedness in Faculty, University, and Hong Kong-China political discourses, and in the global field. This case study may serve as a pattern for future research on how similar centres of comparative education have evolved and why.

I also focused in the 2011 book on the intellectual construction of comparative education, taken to mean the cognitive power which academics in the field exercise in naming and defining the field. As the narratives in this book have demonstrated, the CERC Directors have enacted an embrative definition of the field, with wide interdisciplinary and paradigmatic openness. Their emphases on the foci and purposes of comparative education work, accomplished through CERC, differed as a result of the permutations of their cultural, social capital and habitus as well as the institutional and social contexts within which they operated. This aligns with the broader literature that claims that definitions of comparative education are positional (e.g. Anweiler 1977; Cowen 1990; Ninnes 2004). As Cowen (1990, p.333) cautioned:

The academic definitions [of comparative education by comparative educationists] should be noted, but should also be understood as reflecting some of the institutional, social and political contexts of their work. This social contextualisation of comparative education leads to different comparative educations in different parts of the world.

The CERC story has also elucidated the tensions between the epistemological and sociological facets (Becher & Trowler 2001) of the field of comparative education. The embrative spirit and definitions upheld by actors in CERC, while echoing practices in other parts of the world, also contrast with other stances which propose narrower defini-



tions and stricter gatekeeping (see e.g. Cowen 2003; Paulston 1994). Lee's use of 'comparative education' as a generic name, Adamson's discovery of his 'comparative education habitus', and Mason's realisation (more precisely, *aletheia*) of the interrelatedness of comparative, international and education development (see chapters 2, 4 and 5) demonstrate how sociological practice may not follow neatly the strict typological definitions of comparative education.

While the above findings on the dynamics of research centres echo the shaping of university courses, the discourses differ slightly from those of professional societies. This is mainly because professional societies encompass a wider range of membership, both individual and institutional, and thus the politics become more complex. Nevertheless all of these institutional forms of comparative education seem to have their substantive impact in defining the field mainly through publications. Through them, knowledge is disseminated beyond the confines of a research centre, or a university or a professional society.

The above critical perspectives notwithstanding, CERC as a research centre has played and continues to play a valuable role in bringing together tribes and sub-tribes of scholars and practitioners with common interests and identities, and further disseminating research in comparative education within and beyond its territorial boundaries. If, as Clark (1987, p.233) observed, such scholarly networks "tighten the hold of specialisation upon academic life, a device that would serve externally as a carrying mechanism for a discipline at large", then CERC may be applauded for its great achievements in putting Hong Kong comparative education on the world map.

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## CERC Studies in Comparative Education 19



### **Comparative** *second edition* **Education Research** **Approaches and Methods**

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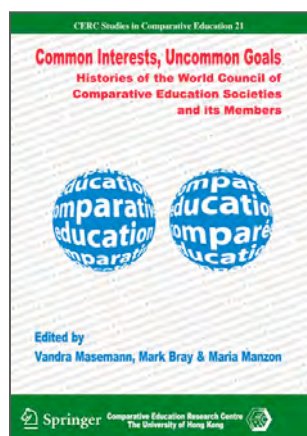
Publishers:  
Comparative Education Research  
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ISBN 978-988-17852-8-2  
January 2014; 453 pages  
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Approaches and methods in comparative education are of obvious importance, but do not always receive adequate attention. This second edition of a well-received book, containing thoroughly updated and additional material, contributes new insights within the long-standing traditions of the field.

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**The editors:** *Mark Bray* is UNESCO Chair Professor of Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong. *Bob Adamson* is Professor and Head of the Department of International Education and Lifelong Learning at the Hong Kong Institute of Education; and *Mark Mason* is Professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education and a Senior Programme Specialist at the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) in Geneva.

## CERC Studies in Comparative Education 21



### **Common Interests, Uncommon Goals Histories of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and its Members**

Edited by Vandra Masemann,  
Mark Bray & Maria Manzon

Publishers: Comparative Education  
Research Centre and Springer  
ISBN 978-962-8093-10-6  
2007 384 pages HKD250/USD38

The World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) was established in 1970 as an umbrella body which brought together five national and regional comparative education societies. Over the decades it greatly expanded, and now embraces three dozen societies.

This book presents histories of the WCCES and its member societies. It shows ways in which the field has changed over the decades, and the forces which have shaped it in different parts of the world. The book demonstrates that while comparative education can be seen as a single global field, it has different characteristics in different countries and cultures. In this sense, the book presents a comparison of comparisons.

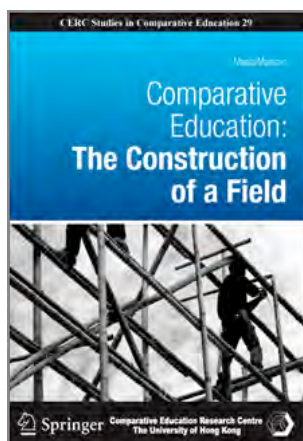
**Vandra Masemann** is a past WCCES President and Secretary General. She has also been President of the US-Based Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), and of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC). **Mark Bray** is also a past WCCES President and Secretary General. He has also been President of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK). **Maria Manzon** is a member of the CESHK and has been an Assistant Secretary General of the WCCES. Her research on the field has been undertaken at the Comparative Education Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong.

More details:

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## CERC Studies in Comparative Education 29



### Comparative Education: The Construction of a Field

Maria Manzon

Publishers: Comparative Education  
Research Centre and Springer  
ISBN 978-988-17852-6-8  
2011, reprinted 2015; 295 pages  
Price: HK\$200 / US\$32

This book is a remarkable feat of scholarship — so remarkable in fact that I put it in the same league as the great classics of the field that had so much to do with setting the direction of Comparative Education. Indeed, this volume goes further than earlier classics to reveal, through textual analysis and interviews with key figures, how the epistemological foundations of the field and crucial professional developments combined to, as the title indicates, construct Comparative Education.

Manzon's work is indispensable — a word I do not use lightly — for scholars who seek a genuine grasp of the field: how it was formed and by whom, its major theoreticians, its professional foundations, and so on. Clearly too, this book marks the rise of a young star, Maria Manzon, who shows promise of joining the ranks of our field's most illustrious thinkers.

Erwin H. Epstein

*Director, Center for Comparative Education  
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**Maria Manzon** is a Research Associate of the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong. She was Editor of CIEclopedia in 2009 and 2010, and Assistant Secretary General of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in 2005.

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This CERC monograph differs from others in the series in that it is not a research report but a commentary on a research institution: the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) which was established in 1994. The monograph documents the trajectory of CERC as narrated by its five Directors and with a commentary by the editor.

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