UNIT 5 : APPROCHES OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- outline the different methodological approaches of comparative education
- explain macro and micro analytic approaches
- discuss the descriptive and historical approaches
- explain the case–study approaches
- describe the statistical and international approaches of comparative education.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

Comparative education is an area of study which tends to lay emphasis on descriptive information about nations and societies and their

educational systems and structures. The major objective of comparative education is to tap the collective experience and draw lessons and principles from it so as to apply the same in different situations. Some educationists believe that by studying the educational experiences of other countries, the educational systems of one's own country could be improved. As such, in comparative education, the educational systems of different countries are studied and analysed in order to understand their educational problems and issues as well as the solutions proposed to solve the problems, and also to study whether the proposed solutions could also be made applicable to one's own country. This unit will help you to discuss the various approaches and methods of enquiry that are followed in the study of comparative education. It is expected that after going through this unit, you will be able to reflect on the educational issues from the perspectives of comparative education.

5.3 APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

After going through the previous units, you must have understood that comparative education studies educational developments in different countries. It helps in understanding the unifying as well as divergent forces underlying the development of the systems of education across the world. The value of comparative approach in solving educational problems lies in the analysis of the causes which have produced them. Thus, studying comparative education would provide an insight into the different systems of education existing in different countries of the world.

The 21st century is an age of globalization that has sparked off a revolution in information and knowledge dissemination. As a result of rapid advances that have emerged due to free trade and its fostering technology, most specifically Information and Communication Technology, there is so much interdependence between countries that any event taking place in one part of the world has its ramifications in the other parts. The widespread use of mass media has also created a sense of curiosity to know about the other countries and compare one's achievements with theirs.

The study of educational systems of different countries in a comparative perspective would help the policy makers of a country to make informed decisions about school reforms. Such a study provides an insight into the factors, which are common in the countries studied. It also points out to the differences in the system and the underlying reasons for similarities and differences.

5.4 TYPES OF APPROACHES

Different approaches were adapted by scholars of comparative education to study the educational systems of different countries. These approaches gave a wider perspective for understanding comparative education. Some of the important approaches are discussed below:

5.4.1 Methodological Approach

According to methodological approach, comparative education involves:

- Systematic collection of data about education from the countries to be studied;
- Categorization of data;
- Generation of hypotheses from the data; and
- Comparison of educational systems of the countries under study.

The systematic collection of data and their analysis helps in understanding society's relationship with education. This understanding further helps in framing educational policies, borrowing them from the experiences of other countries, adopting innovations and finally taking suitable decisions. The methodological approach gives importance on certain issues regarding the field to be specially covered in studies. Bareday (1964), who introduced this approach, was of the opinion that comparative education identifies the laws governing the relation between the school and the society. But this approach gives more emphasis on testing

hypotheses through collection of data and analysis. Knowledge of cultural and historical background of the countries studied was secondary for them.

5.4.2 Macro and Micro Analytic Approach

In the initial stage, comparative education as a field of study was confined only to collection of data from different countries and making comparisons on various aspects of education. But now comparative education is the process of developing new trends to understand the educational realities. Two major trends are observed. They are macro analytical approach and micro analytical approach.

The macro approach involves the analysis of the world system of education and making comparisons of various educational issues. The analytical studies seek to increase understanding of how the variables relate to one or another, to better explain the dynamics of learning, teaching and educational change and to examine how such relationships and processes vary across systems and countries. It is a well-known fact that after World War II, the developing nations in the third world inherited the educational systems of their past colonizers. The newly independent countries were trying to shape their educational systems according to the aspirations and needs of their people. For this they need huge finances, which they were not in a position to provide. Hence, there were funding from international agencies like World Bank, UNESCO and others. To understand the development of education in different countries, it is necessary to understand the relative influence of funding agencies or donor countries, to assess the impact of financial assistance given to those countries etc. These are the subjects of macro analytical approach. Researches are conducted to determine what levels of education should be expanded and what type of education will contribute to change.

The micro analytic approaches, on the other hand, have taken two directions. One urges regional and local analysis within a

nation, arguing that variation in educational practices and school society relations is greater within a nation rather than between different nations and states. The other reasons for the use of micro analysis are that the school society relations and instructional practices cannot be understood solely with reference to broad educational policies pertaining to teacher training, resource allocation for schooling, years of education completed etc. Those who make use of micro analysis approach are more interested in studying the educational reality being structured in the setting of schools, how knowledge is defined, legitimated and tested and how meanings are constructed by students and teachers. For studying and comparing the behavior of schools and educational systems, data is collected from teachers, students, parents and community and their effect on teaching-learning and effective functioning of the school system.

The recent trend however has been a merger of both macro and micro approaches. A combination of these two approaches insists on undertaking macro and micro studies between educational systems of different countries and also on conducting regional and local analyses within a country.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What are the major objectives of comparative education?

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Q 2: What are the points involved in methodological approach?

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Q 3: What type of studies come under micro analytic approach?

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5.4.3 Descriptive Approach

The descriptive studies involve the collection of data on the state of education at a specific point of time in one or more than one country. These studies serve an important purpose of revealing the educational policies and practices in a particular country or countries with regard to various educational issues like provision of compulsory education, enrollment in different stages of education, education for girls, education for the deprived section of the community, achievement in school subjects, teacher training etc. Thus, in the descriptive approach, detail description of educational affairs of a country or countries are collected over a period of time and use this to answer a wide range of what, when and how questions. Further, these studies provide a framework that is essential to an understanding of the reforms such as- the need for comprehensive schools, common school system, interventions of educational technologies such as television, the emergence of open universities and non– formal education and so on. In this way, descriptive studies play an important role in the development of a greater understanding of the educational provision and the status of education across different countries.

5.4.4 Historical Approach

In the historical approach, we study the modern educational problems. This approach helps in identifying the basis on which the modern educational system is built or structured. Knowledge gained at this point might enable us in removing the unacceptable elements in the system and further strengthening the desirable ones. It is not that the investigator employs the historical approach only to know the past in order that it will help in understanding the present better. In fact, the purpose is to improve the future by hinting at those factors which may be more useful in the historical accounts. The understanding of all those geographical, social, racial, political,

religious regional and linguistic factors which influence the educational system of a country is very important. Comparative educationists like Hans, Schneiders and Kandel have contributed to the development of this approach.

One of the major limitations of the historical approach is that the data on which the studies are based may not be reliable because in the collection of data due care or precaution may not always be observed. Therefore, conclusions derived may not be very useful. One should therefore keep in mind that historical materials about educational system of various countries are sometimes not very reliable.

Another difficulty with historical approach is that the historians are generally not impartial in their accounts. They may want to conceal undesirable elements about the history of their country and look at the facts relating to other countries with some perceived prejudice. In this scenario, the truth is not known. Consequently, through this method, we may not reach the right conclusion. The third difficulty of historical approach is that the past is unduly emphasized. As a result, the study of comparative education becomes imbalanced.

5.4.5 Case- Study Approach

Case-study approach is a kind of approach where intensive investigation is conducted on all pertinent aspects of a unit or educational situation. The unit of investigation can be an individual, a child, teacher or educationist, a school or a college, a village programme or an event. Educational comparativists use this method to compare any educational system or a particular level of education of one country with another. The case-study approach uses a range of techniques to collect data. Though it is time consuming, it is comprehensive overview of an educational system of a country.

The case-study approach is exploratory in nature. It involves detailed in-depth data collection employing multiple sources of

information concerning all pertinent aspects of a case. These include observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, institutional records etc. To collect information about the educational systems of other countries, educational comparativists may visit different countries to study different educational systems and compare such educational systems with their own. For instance, educational comparativists from Pakistan can go to England to study the primary education level of the country and compare it with his own education system. Similarly, under case-study approach comparative studies may be conducted on community work projects undertaken in different countries.

Keeping in view the different contexts and perspectives of the educational phenomena, the researcher determines what to be studied within the scope of investigation. The researcher identifies different mechanisms for gathering varieties of evidences from various sources and subjects to qualitative analysis. It can be holistic analysis of the entire case or specific aspect of the case. Data analysis involves descriptive procedures. The issues are identified. Interpretations are made about the case in its given contexts. The detailed perspectives of significant aspects are highlighted. A case-study with comparative approach can rarely be completed by a single individual. It usually requires a team of experts. The completion of projects is followed by case reports prepared by the field workers of different categories like officials of education department, social workers, teachers, parents etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: State the nature of descriptive data.

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Q 5: List the limitations of historical research.

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Q 6: What are the techniques used in case- study approach?

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5.4.6 Statistical Approach

Statistical approach relates to the comparison of total national expenditure on education, like the cost, size and character of school buildings and per capita costs for different items of expenditure in the educational systems. It also includes the enrollment, average attendance and retention of pupils at different levels of the educational ladder. Through this method, it is possible to make a comparison between education and national welfare and progress as expressed in the statistics of literacy, the volume of trade and commerce, per capita income or incidence of crime and poverty etc.

We know that statistical methods are very useful in making comparisons. But we must understand what statistics of literacy is. It means that each country of the world has its own terminology based on national history, its own classification and its own method of collecting and compiling statistical tables. Statistical comparisons are valid only when they deal with commensurable units and internationally equivalent terms. For instance, the comparison is useful in terms of costs per pupil in different countries without going to lengthy explanations of the economic structure, standards of living, rates of exchange and national traditions etc. Statistical tables are being used by international authorities like UNESCO. This organization establishes a recognized dictionary of all educational terms in different languages and accepted equivalents of educational values.

In the early 1990s, importance of comparable statistics was being recognized as education in any given country is increasingly studied with reference to other countries and also within a regional context. It would be worthwhile to mention here that comparability

can be achieved through the adoption and implementation of the same general concepts and definitions by all countries. But ensuring international comparability of data is a long and difficult process in view of the wide variations existing in the national system of education.

From the point of view of international comparability, the focus of educational statistics is on the sources of data. The primary sources for statistics on education are educational institutions of all types, public or private, from pre-school to university level. In most countries, the responsibilities for collecting and presenting data lies with the statistics service of the Ministry of Education or Central Bureau of Statistics. Most countries prepare for their annual publication containing detailed educational statistics. As mentioned earlier, at the international level, UNESCO is responsible for the statistics in the field of education in the same way as the United Nations is responsible for demographic statistics. Data are collected about institutions, pupils, teachers, expenditure and other subjects by means of sending annual questionnaire which are complemented by national publications. In addition, Educational Surveys are conducted to meet specific needs. In a country like India, NCERT has been conducting educational surveys quite regularly.

5.4.7 International Approach

Comparative education refers to a field of study which applies historical, philosophical and social science theories and methods to international problems in education. One of the important branches of comparative education is international education which generally deals with the pressing problems of education such as “Education for All” (EFA), vocational and technical education, peace education and so on.

In the international approach, the data on existing systems of education of different countries related to administration and organization of educational structure are collected. These data are

also collected regarding performance of children of different countries in the school subject and in intelligence. Then, the performance of the children of different countries are compared. One of the most important aspects of international approach is that it brings together the students, the teachers and scholars from different nations who learn about each other. They meet at the places of study and venues of international conferences where they interact and share their findings with each other and thus learn about other nation's educational system and pedagogy. Activities based on the knowledge of international education are conducted by the students. Halls (1989) has categorized international education as a sub-field of comparative education, consisting of international pedagogy. This would include the following items:

(i) Education for international understanding

(ii) Internationalization of teaching norms

(iii) Study of international educational institutions

(iv) International education as applied field attached to comparative education

(v) Studying and sharing reports produced by international agencies.

The international approach of education tends to focus on the descriptive information about nations and societies as well as their educational structure. It also tends to know about the educational developments taking place in different countries in such components as curriculum development, teacher training, distance education, educational media and materials, examinations and learning assessment, non formal education, technical and vocational education, higher education, capacity building, education finance and economic analysis. International educators use the findings derived from comparative analysis to understand better the educational processes they examine and make policy relating to programmes associated with international exchange and understanding.

The international approach of education has developed a special concern for the study of education in the less developed countries. Research is conducted in comparing educational policies and conditions in these countries. The purpose is to study the educational problems of such nations with a view to finding out the causes that have produced them. The computation of Human Development Index (HDI) in different countries depend upon the length and quality of education imparted or received. The HDI's of different countries are compared to arrive at certain conclusions about human development taking place in those countries.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What are the areas of comparison in statistical approach?

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Q 8: List the items included in international pedagogy.

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5.5 LET US SUM UP

- Different geographical, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions influence educational system of different countries. Comparative education lays emphasis on collecting information about system of education in different countries and draw lessons and principles from it and use it to improve the condition of educational systems of one' s own country.
- The comparison of the educational system of various countries lend itself to a variety of methods of treatment. The study of educational system of various countries in a comparative perspective would help

the policy makers of a country to take necessary decisions regarding educational reform.

- The methodological approaches of comparative education give importance on systematic collection of data, categorization of data, generation of hypotheses and comparison of educational system of the countries under study.
- The Macro analytic approach involves the analysis of the world system of education and making comparison among various educational issues. The micro analytic approach has taken two directions—one urges regional and local analysis within a nation and the other is interested in studying the educational reality being structured in the setting of schools.
- The Descriptive approach involves detail description of the educational affairs of a country or countries over a period of time and use these to answer a wide range of questions. Further, these studies provide the frameworks essential for understanding reforms in education.
- The Historical approach identifies the basis on which the modern educational system is built or structured. Case- study is a kind of intensive investigation on all pertinent aspects of a unit.
- The Statistical approach refers to a comparison of statistical data of different countries in terms of national expenditure on education.
- The International approach is that approach which brings together the students, teachers and scholars of different nations so that they learn from each other and share their findings and thus learn other nation's educational systems and pedagogy. It tends to focus on the educational developments taking place in different countries on components like curriculum, teacher training, distance education, non-formal education, vocational education etc. so that a comparative analysis can be made to improve one's own system of education.



5.6 FURTHER READING

1) Bereday, George Z. F. (1964). *Comparative Method in Education*. Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co.

2) Hans, Nicholas. (1992). *Comparative Education: A Study of Educational Factors and Traditions*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall.

3) Sodhi, T. S. (2013). *Textbook of Comparative Education*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.



5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1: The major objective of comparative education is to tap the collective educational experiences of different nations of the world and attempt to draw lessons and principles from it and to apply it in the educational system of one's own country.

Ans to Q 2: The points involved in methodological approach are:

(i) Systematic collection of data about education from the countries to be studied;

(ii) Categorization of data;

(iii) Generation of hypotheses;

(iv) Comparison of educational systems of the countries under study.

Ans to Q 3: Generally, regional and local analysis within a nation comes under the micro analytic approach.

Ans to Q 4: Descriptive data involves detail description of various educational issues of a country over a period of time.

Ans to Q 5: The limitations are:

(i) The data may not be reliable as due care or precaution may not always be observed in collecting the data.

(ii) Historians are not generally impartial in writing their accounts.

(iii) The past is unduly emphasized.

Ans to Q 6: The Case-study approach uses a range of techniques to collect data. These include observation, interviews, audio visual materials, documents, psychological tests, institutional records etc.

Ans to Q 7: The areas of comparison in statistical approach are expenditure on education, enrollment, per capita costs for different items, average attendance and retention of pupils at different levels of education etc.

Ans to Q 8: The items are:

(i) Education for international understanding.

(ii) Internationalization of teaching norms and performance of students.

(iii) Study of international education institution.

(iv) Studying and sharing reports produced by international agencies.



5.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Short Question (Answer each question in about 50 to 100 words)

Q 1: What is known as the Methodological Approach in Comparative education?

Q 2: What are Macro and Micro Analytic Approaches in Comparative education?

Q 3: Explain the importance of Descriptive and Historical approaches in Comparative education.

Q 4: What is the need of Case-Study Approach from comparative perspective?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 100-300 words)

Q 1: Discuss the various approaches of Comparative education.

Q 2: Explain how the various approaches would help to study comparative education across one nation.

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