Book Review of La Educación Comparada hoy. Enfoques para una sociedad globalizada.

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Book Review: EGIDO GÁLVEZ, I. y MARTÍNEZ USARRALDE, M. J. (2019): *La Educación Comparada hoy. Enfoques para una sociedad globalizada*. Madrid, Editorial Síntesis. 280 pp.
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The book *La Educación Comparada hoy* (Comparative Education Today) was put together by two veteran comparativists from the *Sociedad Española de Educación Comparada, SEEC*, Inmaculada Egido Gálvez and María Jesús Martínez Usarralde.

The book tackles an objective spelled out by the authors in its introduction: “systematizing Comparative Education as a realm of study and research with a clear and simple language” (i.e., one that is accessible to the uninitiated and new learners), “but without eschewing academic precision.” The thematic selections emphasize democratizing and universally-oriented contents, which the authors have deemed most pertinent for the work. The book is structured in three clearly differentiated parts: the first part deals with the scientific foundations and methodological bases of the discipline of comparative education; a second section addresses the role that international organisms play in current educational policy-making; the third part takes up the subject of international educational evaluations and university rankings. These second and third parts, having to do with international organisms and evaluations, reflect the authors’ special interest in addressing two topics that have a considerable social impact, evident in the interest they have engendered in the media and in society at large in the last decade.

The contents of the book’s first part are epistemological and somewhat dense. They include questions that are reiterative and highly relevant for the field, such as the great disparity and scientific heterogeneousness found in the consideration of the identity of the object of study; the diatribe regarding “whether Comparative Education should be intellectual or practical”; and the matter of the “ideal relationship between Comparative Education and International Education.” Throughout the book the authors maintain an inclusive, holistic approach, reaffirming the idea that comparative education’s epistemological posture of synthesis represents “a disciplinary field which contemplates education (not strictly limited to schools or other formal learning institutions) in a transcultural context.” In a similar line, they resolve the matter of the duality of comparative education *versus* international education by resorting to the notion of their complementary nature and by adding a third alternative: “supranational education.” This first part of the book deals with two additional topics. The first involves an analysis of the theoretical perspectives that may be used to integrate the study of the comparative fact (i.e., neo-positivism, the sociohistorical approach, the approach of world educational systems, critical ethnography, and social cartography). The second element attests to the book’s imminently didactic, instructional character. In this section, where we are guided through the steps and considerations (with concrete, practical cases) necessary for designing a comparative education investigation; we are able to

follow, from a positivist perspective, the different stages of the research. The authors offer newcomers to the field a host of resources and tips for carrying out comparativist research.

The second part of the book, as noted above, deals with the realm of international organisms and their impact on current educational policy-making. The authors discuss institutions working at a regional level as well as those of an international scope. As they delve into the treatment and perspectives given to governing, supranational policy, and globalization, they disentangle and explain the actions of such bodies as the UNESCO or the World Bank, entities assumed to be known to the neophyte.

The third and final part of the book provides an interesting overview of the OECD evaluations (primarily PISA) as well as the evaluations of the Asociación Internacional para la Evaluación del Rendimiento Educativo (IEA) (i.e., TIMSS, PIRLS, ICCS). Of particular interest is the final chapter, which deals with university rankings (i.e., the Shanghai ARWV ranking, the ranking elaborated by the Times Higher Education, and the QS World University Ranking). The authors bring to light the epistemological limitations of such rankings and in particular their dubious definition of university quality, their research-oriented bias (to the detriment of teaching activity), and their partiality to elite, English-speaking centers focusing on research. Despite these shortcomings, the authors acknowledge that these rankings “satisfy a public demand for transparency and information that governments and institutions have not managed to address.”

This book achieves the objectives that the authors spell out in the very first pages. It is not meant to give an epistemological analysis of the impact that globalization and postmodernity have had on comparative education, nor does it focus on the sweeping ontological theories of comparative science. The book’s great virtue lies in the way it explains, with the novel reader in mind and in the clearest language possible (with no forfeit of academic rigour), crucial issues in comparative education. These include subjects that have had an enormous social impact in the first years of the 21st century, such as the much publicized and debated evaluations of educational performance. The publication also provides the beginner with the essential tools and resources for undertaking comparative research. In view of its merits, this book fully deserves a place in the libraries of university education departments and in the private collections of comparativist academics. *La Educación Comparada hoy* constitutes an invaluable contribution for the comprehension of the theoretical, practical, and teaching aspects of the comparative, international, and supranational education of the 21st century.