

Research article

Trends in Comparative Education in the 21st Century: Research Production and Areas of Interest

Tendencias de la educación comparada en el siglo XXI: Resultados de la investigación y áreas de interés

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Abstract:

Introduction: The article examines the evolution of scientific production in Comparative Education in the 21st century, using a documentary analysis of articles published between 2000 and 2022. **Methodology:** A search was conducted in Web of Science and Scopus, selecting 877 articles that were analysed using MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2022 software. **Results:** A significant increase in publications on Comparative Education was noted during the 2010s. The main journals in this field are "Comparative Education", "Compare", and "Comparative Education Review". The predominant themes were education policy, international education, and social justice, with a notable presence of studies on the teaching profession. **Conclusions:** The scientific production in Comparative Education is growing, with more specialised journals publishing on the subject. Traditional areas of study remain central, although new themes are emerging in response to socio-political changes.

Keywords: Comparative Education; trend; content analysis; comparative research; Educational policy; International Education; History of Education; scientific periodicals.

Resumen:

Introducción: El artículo examina la evolución de la producción científica en Educación Comparada en el siglo XXI, utilizando un análisis documental de artículos publicados entre 2000 y 2022. **Metodología:** Se realizó una búsqueda en Web of Science y Scopus, seleccionando 877 artículos que fueron analizados mediante el software MAXQDA Analytics Pro-2022. **Resultados:** Se notó un incremento significativo en las publicaciones sobre Educación Comparada durante la década de 2010. Las revistas principales en este campo son “Comparative Education”, “Compare”, y “Comparative Education Review”. Las temáticas predominantes fueron la política educativa, educación internacional, y justicia social, con notable presencia de estudios sobre la profesión docente. **Conclusiones:** La producción científica en Educación Comparada está creciendo, con más revistas especializadas publicando sobre el tema. Las áreas de estudio tradicionales siguen siendo centrales, aunque emergen nuevas temáticas en respuesta a los cambios sociopolíticos.

Palabras clave: Educación Comparada; tendencia; análisis documental; investigación comparativa; política de la educación; Educación Internacional; Historia de la Educación; publicación científica.

1. Introducción

1.1. *Comparative Education in postmodern society*

Originally, Comparative education focused on the descriptive analysis of national education systems (Altbach, 1990). These novice studies mainly addressed three dimensions (Arnove, 2015): the scientific, the pragmatic and the international. Nevertheless, with the unparalleled expansion of globalization, its object of study has shifted notably (García Garrido, 2012; García Ruiz, 2012). Since then, comparative studies have shown a considerable interest in tackling the globalization and internationalization of educational processes (Arnove, 2015), with the goal of identifying global educational trends (Martínez-Usarralde, 2003).

Given the complexity of this phenomenon, and the intrinsic nature of Comparative Education, some authors have exposed its close relationship with other academic disciplines. For example, Martínez-Usarralde (2003) believes that Comparative Education is near to educational policy and the history of education. For his part, Vega (2011) adds intercultural education and International Education to this list. The latter seems reasonable given the nature of Comparative Education, which since its beginnings has promoted collaboration between researchers from different countries (Altbach, 1990), something which has increased significantly in recent years with internationalization and the mobility of higher education (Powell, 2020).

As a result of globalization, a global dimension was formed years ago which was driven, among other factors, by international organizations, who acquired considerable power after the Second World War (Raventós, & Prats, 2012), and forever changed the relationship between Nation States and their citizens (García Ruiz, 2012). Despite the fact that little attention was paid to them in the academic realm initially (Arnove, 2009, 2011), in the last decades the interest of researchers has grown exponentially (García Garrido, 2012). This is possibly due to the fact that these international and supranational organizations have become the most influential actors in the educational field (Cook et al., 2004). This privileged status allows them to impose their political agendas, which have a highly economic nature, linked to the development of human capital, and which legitimize the ideology associated with globalization (Egido, & Martínez-Usarralde, 2019). As a result, their discourse frequently promotes neoliberal policies (García Ruiz, 2012) and a higher individualization of society

(Welch, 2001). Arnove (2011) affirms that this ideology is a new control mechanism, which he categorizes as “neocolonialism”. Thus, we can conclude that these international organizations promote an educational change to consolidate a specific ideological thought (Arnove, 2009), often linked to achieving a series of economic and political interests.

From the close correlation between international organizations, globalization and policies emerges the concept of “Global Educational Policy” (Lingard, & Rawolle, 2010), or more recently termed as “Supranational Educational Policy” by Neubauer (2022). This phenomenon has laid on the table the necessity of reconsidering the social functions of education and, accordingly, of research (Raventós, & Prats, 2012). For this reason, and returning to the international dimension of Comparative Education proposed by Arnove (2015), Comparative Education has positioned itself as one of the most powerful tools to tackle contemporary policy reforms (Welch, 2001; García Garrido, 2012). Frequently, international and supranational organisms act as political actors from the shadow, spearheading covert educational reforms (Raventós, & Prats, 2012) through soft power (Egido, & Martínez-Usarralde, 2019; Matarranz, & Pérez-Roldán, 2016; Valle, & Sánchez-Urán, 2023). This has significantly modified the dynamics of the production of national policies (García Ruiz, 2012), so much so that, currently, notable educational reforms are justified and legitimized with figures that, often, are presented from a skewed perspective (Powell, 2020), with the goal of favouring the interests of a determined group. For example, in Germany numerous policy changes were introduced following the results of the PISA Report in 2000 (Davoli, & Entorf, 2019). Something similar happened in Spain with the amendment of “Organic Law 8/2013, from December 9th, to improve educational quality”, which justified the need to change the education law as a result of the low results in the aforementioned standardized test (Fernández-González, 2015). Among the most prevalent policies are the privatization of education (Arnove, 2009) and the necessity for frequent changes (Raventós, & Prats, 2012), which we could refer to as “the agenda of change”.

This scenario has notably influenced Comparative Education, especially taking into consideration its affinity with other disciplines such as history, economy and politics, among others. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze how research production in Comparative Education has evolved and the topics which have generated the most interest in the 21st.

1.2. Areas of interest in Comparative Education: a look to the past and another towards the future

In the academic sphere there seems to be a consensus that Jullien de Paris is the father of Comparative Education. In his work *Esquisse d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée et séries de questions sur l'éducation* (1817), he outlined some areas of study for Comparative Education: educational systems, higher education, educational policies, social justice and gender. Since then, this discipline has developed progressively, until different scientific journals appeared in the mid-20th century, specifically focused on Comparative Education, such as “Comparative Education Review”, “Comparative Education” or “Compare”, among others (Bray, 2003). From that moment, comparative studies showed a growing interest in the academic performance of the student, especially in the 1970s. These were developed from a predominantly quantitative focus (Altbach, 1990), which sought to give greater empiricism and “neutrality” to comparative research (Arnove, 2015), although this last point was just one objective (Raventós, & Prats, 2012). These studies received some criticism for being, on occasion, overly reductionist (Powell, 2020), which is why in last years qualitative research has proliferated, especially on issues of educational policy, gender and social justice (Baily et al., 2016), but also research with a mixed approach (Powell, 2020). On this last theme, social justice, Welch (2001), indicates that Comparative Education has shown great interest in social justice

and in diversity. Further, the increase in accountability policies in order to assure the quality of higher education has also favoured comparative publications on this question (Welch, 2001; Arnove, 2009).

On the other hand, in the 21st century different studies have been developed which have analyzed trends in Comparative Education. As a summary, we can highlight that these works concluded that the main themes which had been addressed in Comparative Education had been the following (See Table 1):

Table 1.

Most recurring themes in Comparative Education

Thematic	Martínez-Usarralde (2003)	Paper			
		Cook et al. (2004)	Acosta (2011)	Vega (2011)	Jacob et al. (2019)
Globalization	X	X	X		
Gender	X	X			
International Education	X	X			
Social Justice		X			X
Multiculturalism		X			
Methodology/Epistemology	X	X	X		
Educational change and reforms		X			
Economy of Education		X			
Educational Policy	X	X	X	X	X
Educational Methodologies			X	X	
History of Education			X		
Curriculum and educational systems			X	X	
Higher education					X

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

2. Methodology

This research has been developed following the documental analysis method, given that the articles published on Comparative Education in the 21st century have been used as units of analysis. This draws attention to the variety of sources of information that this method allows one to analyze, seeing as it encompasses topics from policies to press reports, among many others (Mayring, 2014; Stemler, 2015).

Additionally, this study is framed within manifest (or explicit) analyses, as it deals with the categorization and codification of information (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). From its analysis it is possible to generate a new understanding in the academic field (Jiménez et al. 2017). This, together with its high accessibility (Kleinheksel et al., 2020), has caused this method to gain relevance (Padilla-Carmona et al., 2010). While there are many suggestions of how to carry out this method (Drisko, & Maschi, 2016; Kleinheksel et al., 2020), this research follows that recommended by Martín-Pastor and Durán (2019). For this reason, the documentation was initially accessed in the corresponding databases, where the search criteria which will be detailed in the following sections was applied. Finally, the information has been categorized (or coded) in each of the documents analyzed.

After outlining the research method, it is necessary to indicate the objectives of this research and their corresponding hypotheses:

- Objective 1. Analyze the evolution of research production in Comparative Education since the year 2000.
- Objective 2. Identify the principal themes addressed in the field of Comparative Education in the 21st century.

With respect to the first objective, the hypothesis formulated is that research production in Comparative Education has increased considerably in this period, in that it has greater recognition in the academic field. On the other hand, the hypothesis proposed for the second objective believes that the themes most addressed this century are “educational policy”, “international education” and “faculty”.

2.1. Search and selection of information

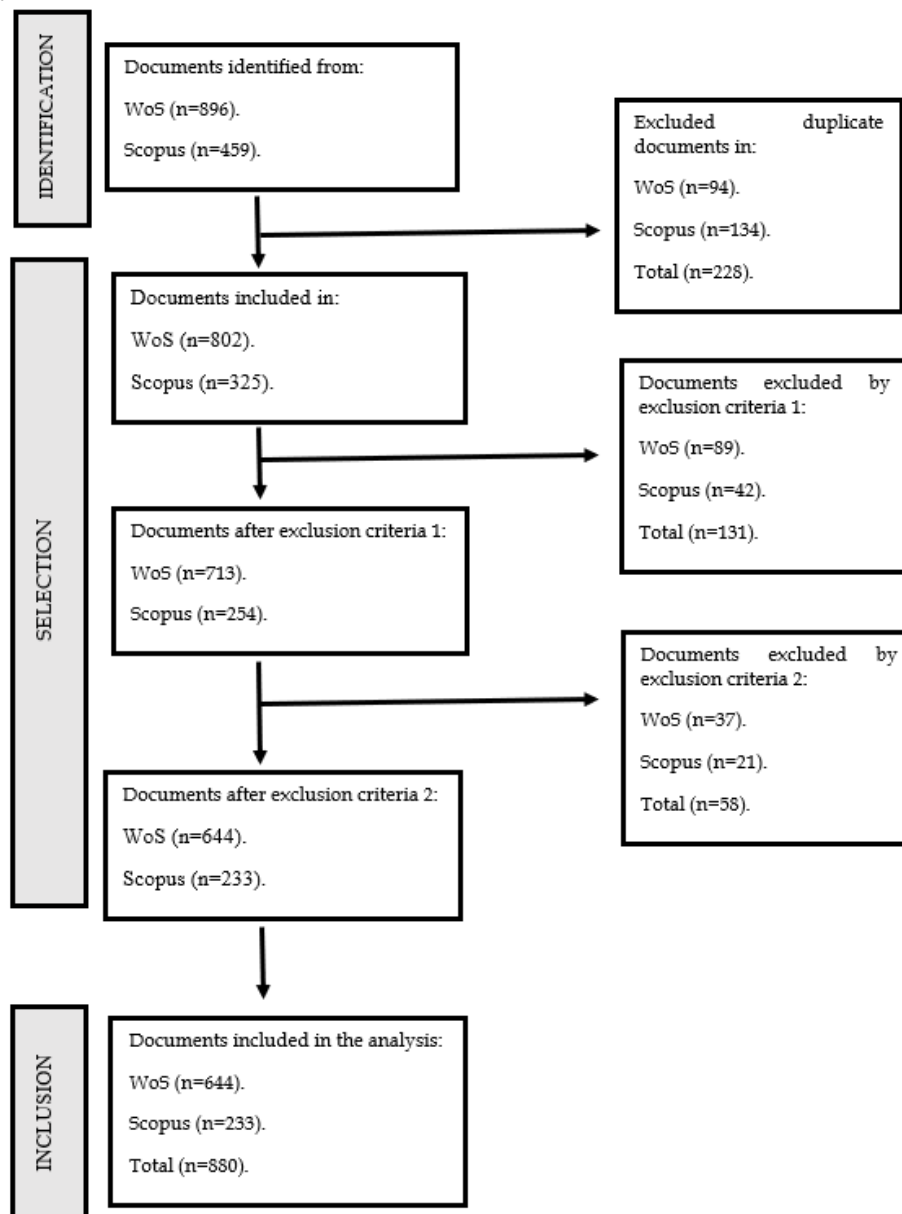
To conduct this literary search two of the main databases in the academic sphere in the field of education were used as references Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, like other recent research (Ruiz-Corbella et al., 2023). With the aim of guiding the search process, the following criteria were used:

- Key words: “Comparative Education”, in title, abstract and/or keywords.
- Publication years: 2000 – 2022.
- Document type: Article.

After applying these criteria, a series of documents published in the indicated period was generated. However, to facilitate understanding and ensure transparency of the search process and selection, the following flow chart has been prepared (see Figure 1):

Figure 1.

Flow chart of search and selection of information



Source: Own elaboration (2024).

In this way, between the two databases 228 duplicate articles were identified. Later, the overview of each of the publications was read. In this manner, 131 publications were identified which were not scientific articles (exclusion criterion 1), as they corresponded to book reviews or summaries of scientific conferences, among other options. Consequently, these documents were excluded from the body of analysis. During the same process, after reading the abstracts, it was observed that 58 of these publications did not address questions related to Comparative Education (exclusion criterion 2), so they were also excluded. As a result, a total of 877 articles have composed the body of analysis of our research.

2.2. Tools of information collection and analysis

With the aim of systematizing the data collection, a qualitative codebook was created based on the objectives set out in this research. With respect to the first of these, the categories of

“Years” and “Journal” were created, to know the year and place in which each article was published. At the temporal level, three different time periods were distinguished: the first two delimited by decades and by the economic crisis of 2009, which significantly impacted the global landscape, including education, especially in its funding in the countries most impacted by said phenomenon, such as, for example, Greece (Melidis, & Tzagkarakis, 2022). Meanwhile, the third period begins with the year 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, which significantly affected all spheres of public and private life (Maestriperi, 2021).

Secondly, the category of “Theme” was designed through an inductive-deductive process. Initially, the starting point was a series of preestablished themes taken from the areas of study, apparently, most recurrent in academic literature. However, during the coding process, using the program MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2022, the necessity of reconsidering some of these initial themes was observed, given that they were either too specific or too general. For this reason, after identifying the 20 most frequent topics, the qualitative codebook was reworked, explaining in greater detail each of the codes (or topics). Next, an external researcher undertook the coding process of 100 articles, which allowed for the contrast of the designed topics. Afterwards, a second round of coding was executed, using the updated qualitative codebook as a reference. Due to its extent, it has been considered pertinent to explain in detail the most repeated topics in the periods analyzed. Since then, in Figure 2 you can observe:

Table 2.

Qualitative codebook

Category	Code
Year	2000 – 2022
Journal	Compare, Comparative Education Review, Revista Española de Educación Comparada...
Thematic	“Educational Policy”, “Faculty”, “History of Comparative Education”, “Curriculum and educational systems”, “Higher Education”, “Trends and Focuses in Comparative Education”, “Social Justice”, “History of Education”, “International Education”, “Academic achievement”; “Theory of Comparative Education”, “Digitalization and IT”.

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Regarding the themes, the detailed description of each of them is presented below:

- Educational Policy: Articles that address both the dynamics of the design of educational policies (politics) as well as the policies themselves (policy), whether at the supranational, national or regional level.
- Faculty: Articles that look at the question of faculty, whether through their training (initial and/or permanent), their professional development, their evaluation, their experience or their needs, among other points.
- History of Comparative Education: Articles that influence the evolution of Comparative Education throughout its history, both from an international, national and/or regional perspective. It also alludes to those articles which study the state of Comparative Education in a determined past historical period.
- Curriculum and educational systems: Articles that delve into the study, development and evaluation of educational systems in the non-university stages (ex. structure, organization...), but also of their curricula (ex. number of hours, subjects, methodologies, intermediate goals...).
- Higher Education: Articles that delve into the study, the development and the evaluation of educational systems in university and higher education (e.g., structure,

- organization...), as well as into their curricula (e.g., number of hours, subjects, methodologies, intermediate goals...).
- Trends and Focuses in Comparative Education: Articles that consider the study of the methodology of Comparative Education itself. Among these it is possible to identify those which suggest innovative applications and others that have an effect on contributions from a theoretical perspective to the development of the method.
 - Social Justice: Articles that address the representation, redistribution and recognition of vulnerable groups. It also includes those works which have a bearing on human rights.
 - History of Education: Articles that consider the evolution of education throughout history, from an international, national and/or regional perspective. This also alludes to those articles that examine the state of education in a specific past historical period.
 - International Education: Articles that look at the international dimension of education, whether through mobility (teachers and students), studies about globalization, relationships of international cooperation or understanding of the internationalization of education.
 - Academic achievement: Articles that look at the academic achievement of students on standardized tests and/or particular subjects in an educational system.
 - Theory of Comparative Education: Those articles which have an impact on the functions of Comparative Education, that develop the work of one or various authors and/or contribute to the debate around the philosophical roots upon which Comparative Education lies. It also includes those works which attempt to clarify the limits between Comparative Education and International Education.
 - Digitalization and IT: Those publications that allude to the challenges, the opportunities or the use of information technologies and communication in the educational sphere. Additionally, it also includes those works which tackle questions related to the digitalization of education from different perspectives (e.g., teacher training, initiatives to favor digitalization, online teaching...).

Moreover, thanks to the analysis software MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2022, the analysis “matrix of codes for group of documents” was carried out, which made it possible to identify the number of times a code had been repeated in the corpus of analysis (see Figure 3). Finally, this analysis made it possible to know how many articles had addressed each of the suggested topics in a given time (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

3. Results

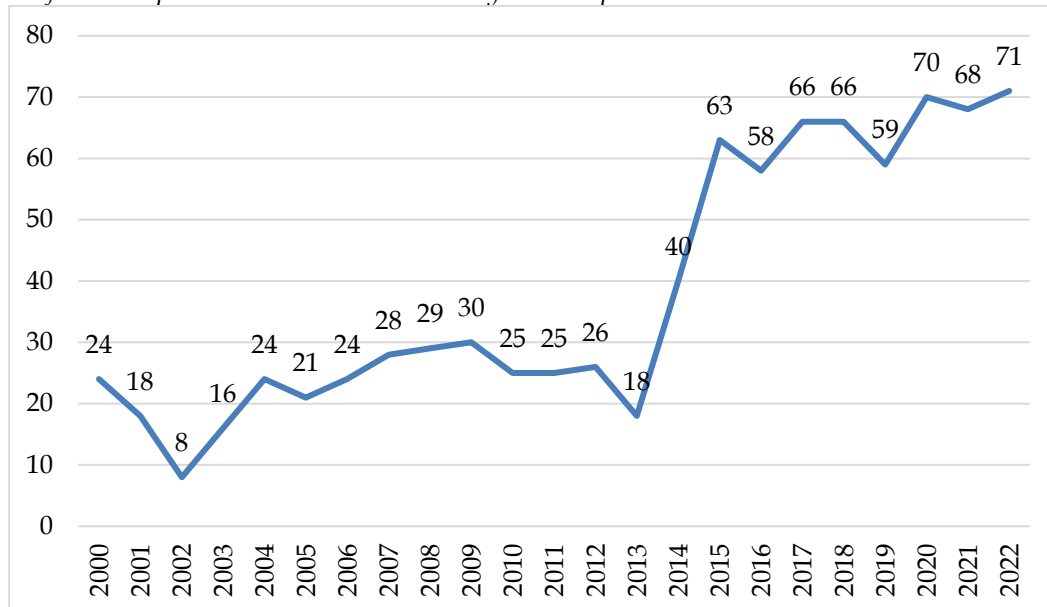
3.1. Evolution of research production about Comparative Education in the 21st century

At the beginning of the 21st century, publications related to Comparative Education underwent a double phenomenon. On one hand, from 2000 to 2002, its publications decreased significantly. So much so that the year 2002 was the moment in which the least number of publications were produced about Comparative Education, given that barely eight articles were published. Subsequently, this produced a ricochet effect and articles about Comparative Education increased until returning to the levels of 2000. Since then, in Figure 2 you can observe how there was a progressive increase in these publications up until 2009 (30 articles). After three years of stability from 2010 to 2012, the number of publications dropped again. However, in the following two years you can see a very significant increase in articles on Comparative Education. This can be observed in the elevated increase in publications between 2013 and 2014, given that in this second year the number of articles on Comparative Education

doubled. Moreover, the following year this trend continued until reaching 63 publications in the databases analyzed. From that point on articles on Comparative Education are at their highest levels of the century, especially in the years 2020 (70 articles) and 2022 (71 articles).

Figure 2.

Number of articles published in the 21st century on Comparative Education



Source: Own elaboration (2024).

After presenting the number of articles on Comparative Education produced in this period, it is key to know where these works were published. In this regard, in the first decade nearly half of the articles are consolidated in three journals (48.66%): “International Journal of Comparative Education and Development”, “Comparative Education” and “Compare”. Meanwhile, publication in other journals is notably different with respect to the three previously mentioned journals, although “European Education” (4.05%) and “Comparative Education Review” (3.60%) stand out (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Main journals in 2000 – 2009

Journal	Papers	%
International Journal of Comparative Education and Development	39	17.57
Comparative Education	35	15.77
Compare: a Journal of Comparative and International Education	34	15.32
European Education	9	4.05
Comparative Education Review	8	3.60
Higher Education	6	2.70
Orbis Scholae	4	1.80
Journal of Curriculum Studies	4	1.80
Oxford Review of Education	4	1.80
American Educational Research Journal	4	3.60

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Later on, in the second decade, a greater distribution of journals where Comparative Education articles were published can be observed, although “Comparative Education”

(10.54%) and “Compare” (10.31%) still stand out. Nonetheless, in said period other journals rose notably, to the point of becoming points of references for publishing. This is the case of “International Journal of Educational Development” (4.71%) and of “Research in Comparative and International Education” (4.04%), which are situated among the five journals with the highest number of articles on Comparative Education in this period. Furthermore, another new data during this period is the breakthrough of “Revista Española de Educación Comparada” (5.35%), located in sixth place, despite not having been located in the top ten previously, and it is the only one whose principal language of publication is not English. Similarly, two other journals have positioned themselves in said ranking (See Table 4): “Teaching and Teacher Education” (1.79%) and “Asia Pacific Education Review” (1.35%).

Table 4.

Main journals in 2010 – 2019

Journal	Papers	%
Comparative Education	47	10.54
Compare: a Journal of Comparative and International Education	46	10.31
International Journal of Educational Development	21	4.71
Comparative Education Review	19	4.26
Research in Comparative and International Education	18	4.04
Revista Española de Educación Comparada	17	3.81
European Education	14	3.14
Teaching and Teacher Education	8	1.79
International Journal of Comparative Education and Development	8	1.79
Asia Pacific Education Review	6	1.35

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Regarding the third period analysed, “Revista Española de Educación Comparada” (7.66%) is in second place with the second number of publications about Comparative Education (see Table 5). Similarly, other journals with a considerable trajectory have established their position (ex. “Compare”, “Comparative Education”, “Comparative Education Review”...), but a new aspect of these years is that five new journals have situated themselves in the top ten on this subject. This has been the case for “Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas” (3.35%), “ECNU Review of Education” (2.39%), “Globalisation, Societies and Education” (2.39%), “Revista Online de Política e Gestão Educacional” (2.39%) and “Journal of Educational Change” (1.44%). Moreover, “Oxford Review of Education” (1.44%), which disappeared from the ranking in the 2010s, has returned to be located among the leading positions.

Table 5.

Main journals in 2020 – 2022

Journal	Papers	%
Comparative Education	19	9.09
Revista Española de Educación Comparada	16	7.66
Compare: a Journal of Comparative and International Education	14	6.70
Comparative Education Review	9	4.31
Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas	7	3.35
ECNU Review of Education	5	2.39
Globalisation, Societies and Education	5	2.39
Revista Online de Política e Gastao Educacional	5	2.39

Research in Comparative and International Education	4	1.91
Oxford Review of Education	3	1.44
Journal of Educational Change	3	1.44
International Journal of Educational Development	3	1.44

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

Similarly, another relevant aspect is that research production in Comparative Education is very diverse. In line with the above, a greater diversity of journals that have published articles about Comparative Education can be observed in the three periods. While in the first decade (2000-2009) these publications were concentrated among 72 journals, in the following period (2010-2019) a total of 173 journals accepted articles related to Comparative Education. Similarly, publications after the pandemic (2020-2022) have been made in 110 different journals, which explains the lower concentration of publications in the main journals of this period.

3.2. Principal areas of interest in Comparative Education in the 21st century

During the first ten years of this century some topics have had a greater presence in publications related to Comparative Education. Among these, “educational policy” (38.29%) stands out, given that it is the subject most represented in these articles (see Table 6). After coming “international education” (17.12%) and “social justice” (16.67%), though their representation in the aforementioned publications differs notably from that of “educational policy”, although they have similar percentages. In a similar way, other topics with a similar representation are “curriculum and educational systems”, “faculty”, “history of education” and “higher education”, given that together with the aforementioned topics, they are the only ones present in at least 10% of the articles published during this time period.

Table 6.

Main themes in 2000 – 2009

Thematic	Codes	%
Educational Policy	85	38.29
International Education	38	17.12
Social Justice	37	16.67
Curriculum and educational systems	29	13.06
Faculty	29	13.06
History of Education	27	12.16
Higher Education	24	10.81
Theory of Comparative Education	20	9.01
History of Comparative Education	19	8.56
Trends and Focuses in Comparative Education	10	4.50

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

On the other hand, in the second decade (2010-2019) “educational policy” (29.37%) and “international education” (27.35%) are also located among the main topics, though the presence of the first is notably lower than it was in the first decade, while “international education” experienced the opposite phenomenon. Additionally, the subjects of “faculty” (16.14%) and “social justice” (14.57%) persist among the most frequent in articles on Comparative Education (see Table 7). However, a decline in references to “higher education” can be observed. Despite the fact that, in general, the previous topics remain as they were, “student academic achievement” (5.83%) emerges as one of the main areas of interest for

researchers in Comparative Education during this time period, located in the same position as the topic “trends and focuses in Comparative Education” (5.83%).

Table 7.

Main themes in 2010 – 2019

Thematic	Codes	%
Educational Policy	131	29.37
International Education	122	27.35
Faculty	72	16.14
Social Justice	65	14.57
Theory of Comparative Education	41	9.19
Higher Education	35	7.85
History of Education	34	7.62
Curriculum and educational systems	33	7.40
History of Comparative Education	30	6.73
Academic achievement	26	5.83

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

In the third period analyzed (see Table 8), after the pandemic caused by COVID-19, “student academic achievement” (5.74%) established itself as one of the principal topics studied in articles on Comparative Education. Likewise, an increase in the interest in questions related to “digitalization and IT” (5.74%) was observed, given that it is the first time this topic is located among the top ten. From another angle, the themes which had historically been protagonists in studies on Comparative Education continue to be present in this period, where “educational policy” (34.45%), “international education” (17.70%) and “social justice” (17.70%) stand out.

Table 8.

Main themes in 2020 – 2022

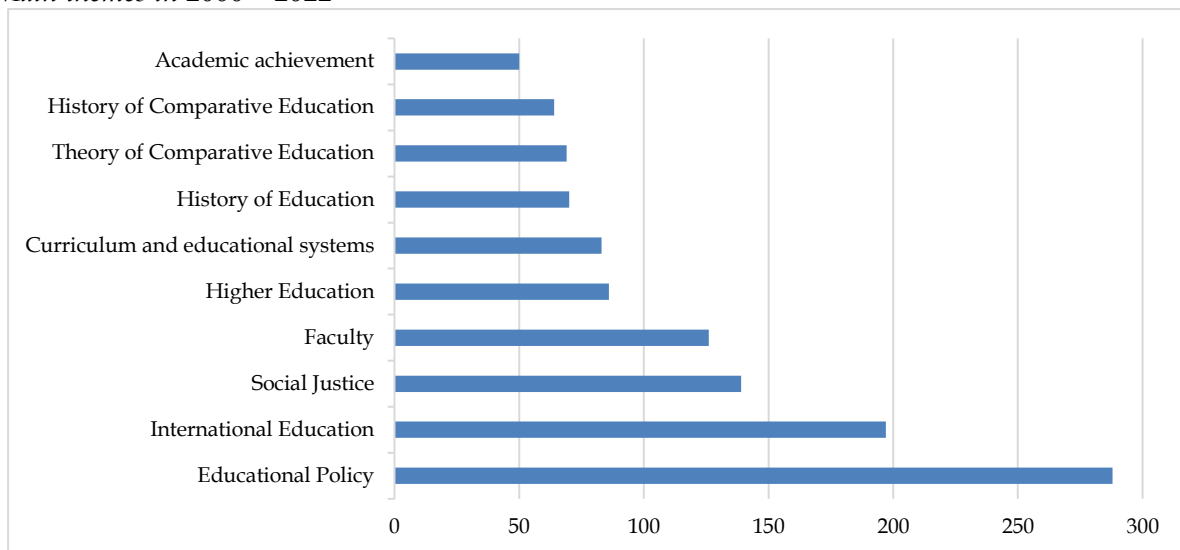
Thematic	Codes	%
Educational Policy	72	34.45
International Education	37	17.70
Social Justice	37	17.70
Higher Education	27	12.92
Faculty	25	11.96
Curriculum and educational systems	21	10.05
History of Comparative Education	15	7.18
Trends and Focuses in Comparative Education	12	5.74
Academic achievement	12	5.74
Digitalization and IT	12	5.74

Source: Own elaboration (2024).

To sum up, it can be affirmed that the main areas of interest of experts in Comparative Education during the 21st century are (see Figure 3):

Figure 3.

Main themes in 2000 – 2022



Source: Own elaboration (2024).

To finish, the figure above shows that "educational policy" is the predominant theme in the field of Comparative Education in the 21st century. In addition, it is followed by "international education", which reinforces the interrelation between both disciplines. Likewise, "social justice" and "faculty" are also positioned as frequent themes. Among them, we find classic themes of Comparative Education such as "higher education", "curriculum and educational systems", "history of education", "theory of Comparative Education" and "history of Comparative Education". However, one of the emerging themes (academic achievement) is positioned in this top-10.

4. Discussion and conclusions

After outlining the results of this research, it is time to put them in dialogue with the theoretical framework in order to try to respond to the two objectives presented. To start, the first of these objectives was to analyze the evolution of research production in Comparative Education since 2000. In this regard, two main trends have been identified. One of these is that the increase in publications in the realm of Comparative Education is confirmed, as indicated by other authors (Bray, 2003; Raventós, & Prats, 2012). This phenomenon is due to various factors, but we can consider that it is closely linked to the dimensions of Comparative Education proposed by Arnove (2015). Among these is the scientific one, which digs into the necessity of this discipline to consolidate itself as a science. Perhaps for this reason, in these decades, the number of journals indexed in WoS and Scopus that have published articles on Comparative Education has grown considerably. Beyond the classic journals mentioned by Bray (2003), a wide range of possibilities has emerged for comparativists to publish their work in. Therefore, we can affirm that Comparative Education has increasingly greater academic-scientific support.

From another perspective, its international dimension has been widely developed due to the boom of international and supranational organizations (Manso, & Thoilliez, 2015; Raventós, & Prats, 2012), which have shifted Comparative Education's object of study considerably (García Garrido 2012; García Ruiz, 2012). Given the protagonist role these organizations play in the design, or imposition, of a global educational agenda (Egido, & Martínez-Usarralde, 2019), the number of studies addressing their policy reforms and affiliated ideology have been

numerous. Faced with the “agenda of change”, Comparative Education has been situated in a privileged position to favor the design and evaluation of education policies. In this way, the pragmatic dimension of Comparative Education, proposed by Arnove (2015), has become a fundamental tool for policymakers and States (Christensen, 2021). As a result, we can conclude that the sociopolitical context has significantly permeated academic research and, as a consequence, Comparative Education has been condensed into the three dimensions put forth by Arnove (2015). Consequently, on the basis of the results presented in this study the first hypothesis of the study could be confirmed, given that the scientific production and scientific recognition of Comparative Education has increased in this century.

That said, the second objective of this work was to identify the main themes addressed in the field of Comparative Education in the 21st century. In this sense, and related with what has been set out in the previous paragraphs, a notable interest has been observed on the part of Comparative Education researchers in all that is related with the process of globalization. The approach to this phenomenon has varied, bearing in mind that some have studied the political dimension of international agendas, where those related to neoliberalism, neocolonialism or data governance would be framed (Arnove, 2009; García Ruiz, 2012; Powell, 2020), but others would address policy. Those studies which delve into the tendency to privatize education and others which do the same with the systems to assure educational quality, especially in higher education, are included in the latter (Arnove, 2009; Welch, 2001). As a result, quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies have all proliferated. The first have been able to attain growing interest due to the consolidation of international standardized tests (ex. PISA, TALIS, TIMMS...) (Aksela, 2019), which have promoted competition among educational systems through the achievement of their students (Altbach, 1990; Navarrete-Cazales et al., 2020), but they have also become one of the main objects of study of Comparative Education (Bray et al., 2020). At the same time, the social context with an elevated migratory flow, especially during the years 2015 and 2016 in the European Union (Saatçioğlu, 2020), and a marked feminist discourse in all the spheres of public and private life (Sen, 2019), have also contributed to reinforcing one of the principal areas of study of Comparative Education: “social justice” which, for its part, has also been threatened by the emergence of international organizations.

In this scenario, and coinciding with other previous research (Acosta, 2011; Cook et al., 2004; Jacob et al., 2019; Martínez-Usarralde, 2003; Vega, 2011), this study has identified the most recurrent topics as being “educational policy” and “international education”, although perhaps this has been developed from a predominantly supranational perspective, for which “supranational educational policy” could contribute to the study of these phenomena and also to rethinking the “theory of Comparative Education” (Neubauer, 2022), which has been diffused by postmodernity (Altbach, 1990; Raventós, & Prats 2012). Paradoxically, interest in “Comparative Education theory” has fallen in these past years, for which it would be recommendable to revisit this area of research. The same thing has happened with “history of education”, perhaps motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has centered more on studies in the more immediate present, situating the core of the educational debate on “student achievement”, “faculty” and “digitalization and IT” (Navarrete-Cazales et al., 2020). Nonetheless, there are many authors asserting the necessity of giving comparative studies a greater historical dimension. In contrast, revising the classic themes suggested by Jullien de Paris in 1817 these topics seem to enjoy much attention in the academic world, bearing in mind that all of them can be found among the most recurrent topics in the periods analyzed. In this way, it is possible to partially confirm the study’s second hypothesis. Despite the fact that “educational policy” and “international education” have been identified as the main themes of this period, “faculty” has had a lower representation than “social justice”, which had not been indicated in the study’s second hypothesis.

That said, this work presents a series of limitations that must be mentioned. One of these could have been the selection of the databases used to search for information. While these databases are the most prestigious, precisely this fact has possibly excluded results of interest for linguistic or thematic reasons. On the other hand, the inductive-deductive coding process, despite being guided by the qualitative codebook, could produce a certain margin of interpretation on the part of the researcher, which should be taken into consideration when analyzing the study's results. For this reason, in future research it would be convenient to expand this study to include other databases where there could be a greater linguistic representation on the part of Comparative Education researchers. Furthermore, it would be pertinent to study the topic of "educational policy" in greater detail in order to identify the other themes it is closely related to.

To conclude, it seems that the academic and sociopolitical context invites us to think that these are good times for Comparative Education and its researchers. On the one hand, there is a greater number of journals to publish in, and on the other, there is a higher demand by policymakers for comparative studies in order to design and evaluate their educational policies. Additionally, the roots of Comparative Education are based on the work of Jullien de Paris and are still very present in comparativists' areas of interest. Precisely for this reason, from its solid roots this discipline should continue to advance towards the very demands of postmodernity, although for this it is necessary to delve into the theory, history and method of Comparative Education in the more immediate future, emphasizing from an eminently supranational perspective.

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