

Education and Geopolitics in a Changing Europe

Forty Years of Scholarship in *European Education*

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Abstract

This article chronicles the history of the journal European Education since its establishment in 1969 by placing it within the larger context of geopolitical changes of the twentieth century and the historical debates on theory and method in the field of comparative education. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 40 journal volumes (158 journal issues and 1,176 articles), the article explains how the journal attempted to return comparative education in the United States perspective to its original geographic epicenter, Western Europe, and provided a space for cross-national comparisons on pedagogical issues like curriculum. The article also demonstrates the various geopolitical pressures on the journal within a cold war and later a postsocialist framework. It concludes by looking at the future of journal by understanding its original purpose and the contemporary debates within comparative education.

The 1960s is widely remembered in the West as a time of social and political unrest catalyzed by the counterculture and social revolution. This time period not only saw increased pressure on cold war geopolitics in many countries (nonaligned and developing countries alike) but also was a turbulent time for the academic community. The inception of *European Education* (originally known as *Western European Education*) can be traced to the center of academic debates in the United States about the future of comparative education during this time. Set against the backdrop of the cold war, the establishment of the journal aimed to address three issues. First, the journal committed to safeguard Western Europe as one of the central foci of comparative research in the United States as a response to an increasing preoccupation of the field with Soviet studies. Second, it attempted to reconceptualize the debate on theory and method by searching for a synthesis of “science” and “context” in comparative education research. Finally, it brought the field back to the study of pedagogical aspects of education, which were disappearing from the foci of comparative research in light of more popular studies of education policies and school structures.

Fearing the neglect of broader pedagogical issues in comparative education, some scholars insisted on increasing the usefulness and relevance of comparative education to teachers who were most directly involved in the process of education (Springer, 1977). Indeed, the role of comparative education in teacher training was discussed at the first World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (Masemann & Epstein, 2007). As the future of comparative education was increasingly questioned throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Ursula Springer (the founding editor of the journal) saw the revival of the field in its return to a more systematic, comparative study of the “heart of education”:

If comparative education would pay more attention to school functions and pedagogy, this turn may lead to a revival of the once dynamic spirit of purpose and enthusiasm. If not, we will continue

to diminish in vitality, membership, and relevance in the face of the ever-growing challenges that school education poses for modern society. (Springer, 1977, p. 369)

It was with this dual purpose in mind—returning the field to its original geographic epicenter (Western Europe) and reconceptualizing its methodological and theoretical orientations (cross-national multiple case study analysis of pedagogical aspects of education)—that *Western European Education* entered the field of comparative education in 1969. Its forty-year journey in comparative education is a complex story of how the convergence of geopolitical events (the cold war and then the collapse of the socialist bloc), institutional forces (especially in the field of comparative education), and individuals (journal editors, advisory board members, and contributors) led to its creation and contributed to its longevity. As such, the article places the history of the journal within the larger context of geopolitical changes of the twentieth century and the historical debates on theory and method in the field of comparative education. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 40 journal volumes (158 journal issues and 1,176 articles), this

study highlights the dynamics of scholarship on European education as reflected in the conceptual tapestry of the journal's publications. The goal is not to provide a complete account of authors and articles over the span of forty years, but rather to convey the dynamic spirit and the unique character of the journal and its editors throughout the four decades of its existence.

Balancing science and context in comparative education

Western European Education was established in reaction to the perceived identity crisis in the field of comparative education in the United States in the late 1960s. The identity crisis was in fact Eurocentric, wherein American scholarship began to shift away from the historical study of education in Western Europe. Set against the backdrop of the cold war, the crisis had two foci: the shifting geographic locations of the field and the changing theoretical and methodological traditions (Silova, 2009). First, the cold war quickened the alteration of the geographic focus of comparative education. With the advent of development education and area studies as a branch of comparative education, scholarship began to focus on nonaligned and developing countries as a way to pursue the national interest of the United States. Both the Soviet Union and the United States raised particular questions in regards to the emerging nations of the 1960s, seeing their potential alignment as an opportunity of political and economic positioning in the cold war. As Steiner-Khamsi (2006) noted, “the worries of the two superpowers were many”: “with whom do these newly emerging countries trade, with whom do they side in international conflicts, and for whom do they vote in the newly established multilateral organization of the United Nations?” (p. 23).

As national interest shifted toward the newly emerging and developing countries, the funding of educational research and development followed. This shift moved scholarship away from Western Europe, which was the original epicenter of the field, toward a new geographic emphasis on Soviet studies and nonaligned countries (Silova, 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). As this shift could be perceived as a Eurocentric identity crisis of comparative education in the United States, it meanwhile led to the expansion of the field to new geographic areas. This perceived crisis contributed to the establishment of the journal in the late 1960s. Furthermore, the shift in

geographic focus coincided with a shift in preferred methodology. A reaction against qualitative, single-country studies produced the space for new methodologies (primarily quantitative) that claimed to achieve greater scientific reliability and validity in cross-national comparisons. As Kazamias and Schwartz (1977) explained, “those who advocated the all-out use of social science methods and techniques conceived of scientific comparative education as dealing with objective, measurable and concrete level of reality which, in principle, at least, existed independent of the observer” (p. 167). The scientific perspective slowly replaced extreme historicism with its search for generalizations, regularities, and—most importantly—quantification (Kazamias & Schwartz, 1977), in concurrence with the shift in geographic focus. Comparativists now had the tools (scientific methodology) and the funding in specific countries (nonaligned and Soviet studies) to advance the field of comparative education in a new direction. As a result, “scientism” reached deep into the field of education, penetrating areas such as curriculum studies by emphasizing mathematics, science, and language studies through the justification of such ideas as Tyler’s curricular rationale and the need to catch up to the Soviet Union after the launch of Sputnik (Flanders & Thornton, 2004).

Combined, the shift in geographic focus and the new emphasis on scientific methodology had major implications for comparative education. In particular, Springer (1969a), the founding editor of *Western European Education*, noticed that comparative research became dominated by political, economic, and social aspects of education, including “structural reforms, access to secondary schools, enrollment ratios, [and] politics of education”—not “what was taught [and] how the school programs [were] arranged” (p. vii). With the scientific approach winning over the historical dimensions of the field, Springer (1977) was anxious that “the essential function of schools”—pedagogy, curriculum, and the transmission of knowledge—would become neglected by comparative education scholars:

“Scientific”—in today’s conception of the social sciences—means empirical, quantitative, predictive. Pedagogical matters, however, call for qualitative evaluation, for judgments frequently based on values that are rooted in cultural context, etc. Add to this the comparative component with its unimaginable variables in the social sphere, and it becomes clear how unattractive any research on pedagogical topics must appear to those seeking identity and recognition as “scientists.” (p. 361)

The emphasis on “scientific” comparison rearranged what “education” meant in comparative education. That is, the scientific approach shifted away from the “pragmatic utility” of education (how education works) and toward “scientific elegance” (Springer, 1977, p. 361). At the same time, the new geographical contours pushed by the various funders lost sight of the original epicenter of comparative education, specifically Western Europe. It is within this framework—the shifting frontiers and methods of comparative education—that *Western European Education* emerged as a journal for an American audience. The content it chose to publish was thus a reaction to the “methodological repercussions” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p. 40) driven by the identity crisis in comparative education. In this context, *Western European Education* attempted to pull comparative education back toward the study of school functions and pedagogy—what Springer called the “heart of education” (personal communication, 24 February 2009)—in the original geographic location of comparative education.

Returning to the “heart of education”

Throughout the four decades, the journal has consistently engaged in a comparative research of education issues that were not easily quantifiable, issues that were reaching into the very “heart of education”—curriculum and teaching, school and society, education equity, higher education reforms, the changing contours of European education space, and others (see Table 1). Of 158 journal issues published between 1969 and 2008, 20 percent (thirty-one issues) were devoted to various qualitative aspects of postsecondary education reform, 17 percent (twenty-seven issues) examined the broader themes of curriculum and teaching, 11 percent (eighteen issues) dealt with the changing nature of European education space, 10 percent (sixteen issues) addressed issues of education equity, 5 percent (eight issues) focused on research and policy, and 5 percent (seven issues) discussed school and society (see Table 1). Commenting on Springer’s commitment to bring pedagogical aspects into the center of comparative education research through *Western European Education*, George Bereday (1969) noted that it was “a useful service” to the field:

It is at the center of the growing movement to return the studies of Comparative Education from the examination of more general social problems surrounding education to more specific matters of content of instruction and its effectiveness. . . . Such curricula studies, as well as studies of Western Europe, tended in the past twenty years to be neglected in favor of other concerns. (p. v)

Common to all these thematic foci of comparative research was the fact that it was difficult, if not impossible, to quantify its outcomes and uproot the discussion from its original historical context. Even within the journal issues that were entirely devoted to education policy (5 percent or eight issues), where quantitative research would be more likely to appear, the journal remained true to its original purpose of explaining the contextual nuances of education policy trends. For example, a special issue on the results of the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) used the larger-scale assessment data from various countries, yet emphasized the need to interpret the data within a sociocultural context “instead of depending mostly on the professional quality of instruction or on the homogenization of a world education system” (Lingens, 2003b, p. 5). Furthermore, some of the articles in the special issue on PISA directly addressed the “question of cultural content as a factor in international academic achievement” (von Kopp, 2003, p. 70).

The emphasis on pedagogical aspects of education and the value of the historical context shaped the structure and organization of the journal for four decades. Recognizing the importance of the historical context yet understanding the value of cross-national comparison, the journal’s goal was to advance comparative study of pedagogical aspects of education through multiple case-study analysis. The idea was to publish thematic journal issues, which would feature qualitative country case-studies tightly embedded in their political, economic, and social contexts, yet allow an opportunity for the editor (and the reader) to compare educational issues across different contexts and cases (Silova, 2009). Based on a qualitative content analysis of the journal issues over four decades, two points warrant closer scrutiny because of their relation to the larger debates in the field of comparative education. First, it is important to discuss the continuing emphasis of the editors on multiple case-study analysis in comparative research of pedagogical aspects in education, as well as some of the difficulties associated with it. Second, it is necessary to explain why some editors diverged (at least temporarily) from the original intent on multiple case-study comparison and moved back to single-country comparisons.

Toward multiple case-study analysis in comparative research

The journal's original intent was to find a balance between contextually embedded research and cross-national comparison through multiple case-study research. The editor was to provide a cross-national comparison in the introduction across all of the articles in a particular issue. This way, the journal could include articles that focused on single-country studies while still adding to the scholarship of a particular theme. The editorship, in this sense, would ultimately be an exercise in cross case-study comparison. With thematic issues, the editor would pull together all of the articles, presumably from multiple countries, to provide a meta-analysis in the introduction. For example, the very first issue of *Western European Education* focused on curriculum design in Sweden, West Germany, France, Italy, and England. In the editorial introduction, the editor (Springer, 1969a) analyzed differences and similarities in theoretical and practical approaches "to the problem of values that are inherent bases of curriculum decisions" in each country (p. 9). Furthermore, she noted the vast range of educational philosophies that influenced actual school policies in each country and across the country-cases featured in the issue. In essence, the editorial introduction provided a cross-national overview of official school programs—"what is being taught and how the school programs are arranged"—in five countries (Springer, 1969b, p. ix). While the editor's comparison was limited to description, analysis, and interpretation of "normative dimensions" (not the actual uses of the curricula), the journal issue provided an important groundwork for comparative analysis of official school programs in a cross-national perspective. As Springer (1969b) stated, "professional educators may find this approach of interest because of its design and methodology": "This method of analyzing empirical data drawn from several national school patterns may lead to generalizations of broad transnational validity. As a result, educational theory, still largely speculative and culture-bound, may finally rise to the level of a modern science" (p. x).

During the period of four decades, 79 percent (125) of all issues were based on the original principle of comparative analysis through multiple case-study research, which Ursula Springer had introduced in 1969. While Springer was editor (1969–71), she mentioned each article in her editorial introductions. Each issue, moreover, had a clear theme and for the most part represented multiple countries. Occasionally, Springer would break the overall theme into subthemes, referring to an article in the issue covering the subtheme. For example, in an issue titled "New Designs in Teacher Training," Springer (1970) broke the theme into three subthemes within her introduction: "Basic Training," "In-Service Training," and "Access to Professional Information." This meta-analysis within her introductions tied the journal together across cultures and countries.

Similarly, other editors followed the original principle of multiple case-study comparison introduced by Ursula Springer. For example, Raymond Wanner (1972–79), the journal's second editor, followed in Springer's footsteps, though he introduced the journal's first single-country study; Susanne Shafer (1986–97) titled her introductions with the title of the issue itself, emphasizing the editor's role as meta-comparativist; Hans Lingens (1997–2004) provided concise introductions to each issue, which all had a clear theme. Most recently, Edward Bodine and Bernhard Streitwieser (2005–8), who opted for different guest editors² for most of their editorship, followed a similar pattern by writing editorial introductions detailing the theme of the particular issue. Most editors rarely if ever veered from the meta-analysis Springer originally intended the editor to write. One notable exception was William Brickman, who did not use editorial

introductions to summarize all articles featured in a thematic issue. Instead, he ensured that each article related in some way to the overall theme. The selection and placement of articles in the overall theme became essential. He either had an introduction that tied the issue together or relied on selecting and placing articles in a position that gave the issue an overall flow of easy comparison.

When designing each issue around the idea of comparative case studies, editors faced several challenges. First, the issue of language proved to be a large barrier that slowed the whole process of production. For a good piece of scholarship in the journal, authors would have to know multiple languages, have access to the original sources, and be able to communicate with education stakeholders locally. The importance of language proficiency in comparative research was repeatedly pointed out as one of “the prerequisites of comparative education” (Bereday, 1964, p. 131) or even as “a seal of approval” for those aspiring to join the ranks of comparative educators (p. 142). Yet it remained one of the largest obstacles in comparative education research—an obstacle that the journal attempted to remedy through the translation of original research studies into English. To ensure adequate translation, the editor would need either to know the language of the original text or hire someone to translate for the journal’s main audience, the American academy. Springer (1969b) emphasized the need for a strong awareness of language for any good comparative piece:

Awareness of precise definitions and connotations is particularly important in a cross-cultural comparative study in which the common denominators of terms and concepts play a great role. (For example, how close in meaning is the French *méthode actif* to the Italian *metodo induttivo*? Both terms are central elements in the guidelines for teaching method.) (p. ix)

Second, multiple case-study research presented difficulties in terms of research methodology as scholars attempted to engage in a comparative analysis of contextually embedded school practices and curricula. Research of this caliber would require an intimate familiarity with the education environment of each country involved in a comparative research study, including the way in which each school system functions, works, and interacts. It would also require countless contacts, interviews, and school visits—just as Springer (1969b) used when writing her cross-cultural comparison of France, West Germany, and Italy. As Bereday (1964) explained, comparative educators “must be able to define and interpret the educational system and its development in the light of their intimacy with the fabric of society” (pp. 143–44), which was seldom possible without an extended residence abroad. In addition to the time commitment necessary to become an expert on education phenomena in different national settings, Springer (1977) highlighted some of the methodological implications of comparative research that would delve into the pedagogical aspects of education:

Research methods present formidable pitfalls to the bold comparativist who would venture into the jungle of school practices and curricula. From the starting point of defining the objective, parameters, and precise questions to be explored to deciding on premises, equivalences, sources from which to obtain relevant data, control of variables—the processes are more than cumbersome in an international context. Analyzing intermediate findings for possible inferences and the final results for their validity is difficult enough within a national setting; in a comparative setting, the reward in terms of generalizations will always be modest or, if grandly inferred, disputable. (p. 362)

Combined, these multiple factors—problems of expertise (the rarely found combination of competence in comparative methods and foreign language, as well as an area of pedagogy) and feasibility (scarcity of data, unmanageable variables, etc.)—would complicate comparative study of pedagogical aspects of education. Furthermore, it would also delay the publication of contemporary topics, thus reducing the journal’s chance of being innovative. For example, Harold Noah, who served as the editor of *Soviet Education* (also published by M.E. Sharpe) commented that these journals were “typically quite time-lagged,” meaning that it was not unusual to see a two- or three-year delay between original publication date and subsequent appearance in one of the M.E. Sharpe journals (personal communication, 13 January 2009). This criticism, however, was not essential to journal editors, who believed that theoretical and methodological breakthrough—cross-national analysis through multiple case studies—far outweighed such limitations as the time lag. As Brickman (1981a) explained: “Speed may be in a modern mode, but it is no synonym for success in the advancement of justice in academic activity” (p. 5).

Reverting to single-country comparison

Finding articles that were truly comparative in Springer’s original understanding (multiple-country case studies concerning pedagogical questions) was difficult for many editors. As a result, it was not uncommon for issues to focus on one country’s multiple educational issues instead of examining one theme through case studies of different countries. In fact, there were thirty-three issues (21 per-

cent of all journal issues in four decades) devoted to single-country case studies that then focused on different educational issues within a country (see Table 2). Interestingly, all of the editors with the exception of Ursula Springer went back to single-country comparison (typically using nation-states as the unit of analysis) at some point during their tenure, including Raymond Wanner (seven single-country issues), William Brickman (fourteen issues), Susanne Shafer (two issues), Hans Lingens (eight issues), and Edward Bodine and Bernhard Streitwieser (two issues). For example, Brickman (1981b) edited an issue titled “Education in Italy: Intellectualism, Indoctrination, and Individualism,” which included a full-length translation of the new middle-school curricula followed by commentaries from academics. Shafer (1988) took a slightly different approach with the issue “Sweden’s Response to Educational Needs,” which included topics from peace education to handicapped immigrant preschool education and from sexual equality to working life education, all within one issue.

While the single-country issues began under Wanner (1974) in his “Change in French Education,” it was not until Brickman that the journal’s coverage of single countries exploded. Of all editors, William Brickman reverted to single-country studies most frequently, devoting half of all journal issues he edited (fourteen out of twenty-eight) to education phenomena in specific national contexts (see Table 2). In fact, his very first issue, “Higher Education in Germany” (Brickman, 1979), was devoted to a single country. Brickman’s fascination with the single-country studies reflected his commitment to “traditional and rigorous historiography” (Sherman-Swing, 1987, p. 4), which dominated comparative education from Marc-Antoine Jullien’s (1962/1817) *Esquisse et vues préliminaires d’un ouvrage sur l’éducation comparée* [Outline and Preliminary View of Work on Comparative Education] to the 1960s. William Brickman (who served as the first president of the Comparative [and International] Education Society³ and edited *Western European*

Education from 1979 to 1986) was perfectly positioned to promote historiography in comparative research. Epitomized as a scholar who spoke several languages— “a linguist fluent in classical Greek and Latin, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Danish, Swedish, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Portuguese, Rumanian, and Bulgarian” and others (Sherman-Swing, 1987, p. 3)—Brickman insisted on the value of single- country comparative research to account for the larger social and political contexts of education in that country.

Following the historiographic tradition of Sir Michael Sadler, Issac Kandel, and Robert Ulich (Brickman’s professor and mentor), William Brickman was a proponent of qualitative research, who argued that it was necessary to know the languages and histories of the countries studied. If comparisons were to be made between systems or reforms were to be transferred, he astutely argued that context and local conditions had to be considered. As the popularity of the science of comparative education grew, Brickman “did not waver in the belief that documentary research in original languages was the most important vehicle for the teaching of comparative education” (Sherman-Swing, 1987, p. 3). While he recognized the

need for specialists trained in quantitative research (especially in such fields as sociology and economics), his own scholarship and editorship drew on the fields he knew best: literature, history, and foreign languages. As one of Brickman’s students explained, “he left quantification of hypotheses to others”:

Brickman’s worldview began with a reverence for history, with recognition that present and future were a function of the past. As editor of *School and Society* he discussed in editorials contemporary issues such as church/state relations and segregation, but he also found it necessary to illuminate the present through a historical and international lens. The necessity of wearing this lens applied to all his work. Not satisfied with Jullien as an archetypal figure, he pushed origins of the field of comparative education back to the Persians. The etiology of a subject was more than idle curiosity. It was a point of departure without which comparative analysis would not be possible. This propensity to explore boundaries applied to other areas of his intellectual life. (Sherman-Swing, 1987, p. 5)

It is not surprising, therefore, that Brickman gave the journal a more historical feel and introduced the journal, and the American understanding of Europe, to the smaller countries including Malta and Luxembourg. Brickman’s passion for the history of education was evident in his occasional attempts to veer away from the original use of editorial introductions to summarize the main themes of the journal. Instead, he would use the editor’s space for introducing analysis pertaining to the history of education (often unrelated to the theme of the journal). For instance, in the issue “Education in Denmark and Elsewhere in Western Europe,” Brickman (1981b) wrote an introduction titled “The Centenary of Three Comparative Educators: I. L. Kandel, Franz Hilker, and Friedrich Schneider.” Similarly, an issue on “Educational Development in the Netherlands” (Brickman, 1984) included an editorial introduction titled “The Turkish Cultural and Educational Revolution: John Dewey’s Report of 1924.” While both of these editorial introductions related neither to the issue’s theme nor to its country focus, they did reflect Brickman’s passion for advancing historiography in comparative education research. As such, these issues reflected his attempt to keep “historicism” in the field of comparative education, which had increasingly been deemphasized as compared to “scientism.” The fact that he injected more history into the journal

than any other editor was likely a product of his education as well as his attempt to return comparative education to its origin—at least in Brickman’s view.

While the role of the editor determined various details of the journal throughout the four decades (journal layout, themes, countries, authors, guest editors, etc.), all editors remained consistently committed to promoting comparative study of the pedagogical aspects of education, while emphasizing the value and the uniqueness of political, socioeconomic, and historical contexts. Unlike other journals that were primarily driven by the geopolitics of the cold war and therefore focused on comparing the Western models of education to the Soviet education system or simply focused on the Soviet education system (for example, *Soviet Education* or *Comparative Education Review*), *Western European Education* was able to focus solely on Europe. This proved to be an opportunity for the journal. Unfettered by the need or pressure to report on the differences between the West and the East, the journal could intimately focus on educational issues of great importance to the “heart of education” (curriculum debates, different higher education models, and educational cooperation), as well as the debates about the future of comparative education (and the role of qualitative inquiry such as multiple case-study analysis and historiography). More than twenty years after the launch of the journal, *Western European Education* was still trying to answer the original questions it articulated in 1969:

The time is ripe to take another look at our real intent in education. To do so suggests that we reconsider the philosophic base on which we have built the pedagogic edifice. Are theory and practice interconnected with reason, clear purpose, and a functional design? . . . We are torn between heeding the behaviorists, with their promises of successful knowledge acquisition by all, and the critical theorists, who bash past practices and urge freedom for the learner. Shall we test children to verify academic achievement, or is the emphasis to be placed on the child or learner engaged in experiencing and thereby evolving as a person, an individual? (Shafer, 1991a, p. 3)

Education and geopolitics of new Europe

The cold war had a tremendous effect on comparative education. Winston Churchill’s (1946) famous quote symbolized Europe’s split into East and West during the cold war: “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.” Not only did it result in the buildup of military sites along each side of the border of the Iron Curtain, but it also had major implications for comparative education as the U.S. federal funding shifted toward the area studies (especially Soviet studies and nonaligned countries). With comparative education quickly becoming a component of national security in the U.S., federal and academic interest in the study of Western Europe diminished (Silova, 2009; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). During the cold war, for example, the journal was able to focus on topics of little importance to the geopolitics that dominated Washington and the Kremlin. Unlike other journals that were preoccupied with comparing the Western models of education to the Soviet education system, *Western European Education* was able to focus solely on Western Europe throughout the first twenty years since its establishment.

Nevertheless, the geopolitics of the cold war inadvertently influenced how the journal editors defined “Western Europe.” In particular, the political dynamics of the cold war made Western Europe synonymous with “Europe” as the United States’ partner in the Western alliance, and that

“usage implicitly excluded countries behind the iron curtain from a European identity” (Hay, 2003, p. 1). This geopolitical division was clearly reflected in the journal, which, for the first twenty years (1969–89) was dominated by articles examining education issues in Western, Northern, and Southern Europe. The countries located beyond the Iron Curtain were left to the domain of other journals, including *Soviet Education* (also published by M.E. Sharpe). Since its establishment in 1969, this journal’s articles have focused primarily on Western Europe (46 percent), Northern Europe (32 percent), Southern Europe (13 percent), and Eastern/Central Europe (9 percent) (see Table 3). It was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) that the journal began to feature articles on education in the former socialist bloc.

As the cold war came to an end, the geopolitics of the time emerged as a more influential force on the journal. The collapse of the socialist bloc extended the perceived geographic borders of Europe, changing the definition of Europe. One of the immediate implications for the journal was the name change from *Western European Education* to *European Education* “to more accurately reflect the changing political landscape of Europe” (Sharpe, 1991, p. 2). Furthermore, the journal became more reflective of the educational implications of the changing geopolitics of Europe. In particular, content analysis of articles published since the reunification of Europe (1989–2009) suggests that the editors have attempted to reflect two major educational trends, the role of education in postsocialist transformation, and educational implications of the European Union expansion.

Education and postsocialist transformation

As the socialist bloc collapsed, so did the barriers preventing most geopolitical pressure on *European Education*. The journal quickly responded to the changing geopolitical landscape of Europe by producing several issues on the role of education in postsocialist transformations. In the early 1990s, for example, several issues were dedicated to discussing implications of postsocialist transformations for education, including “Education and Social Change” (Shafer, 1990), “Changing German Education” (Shafer, 1991b), “Removing the Communist Harness in Eastern Europe” (Shafer, 1993), and “Roots of Change and Reform” (Shafer, 1994; see Table 4). Congruent with the journal’s original mission, most articles focused on “the heart of education,” including changes under way in curriculum and teaching/learning processes. Shafer (1991a) explained the important role of new school curricula as old ideologies collapsed and new ones were only beginning to form:

In Europe a huge void has come about with the collapse of Marxism-Leninism. That ideology has formed the basis for educational theory and practices imposed originally by Stalinist Russia on that nation’s Eastern European satellites. With communism defrocked, educators and the public-at-large are searching for what should take its place. (p. 3)

As the search for new curricula was under way across “old” and “new” Europe, one entire issue, “History Teaching in the New Europe” (Shafer, 1992), was devoted to the role of history curriculum in developing “a European historical consciousness” (p. 6). Through the case studies of history teaching in Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Denmark, Switzerland, and Germany, this special issue attempted to examine whether and how history education could be depoliticized and deideologized in order “to foster a new sense of Europe as a community” (Shafer, 1992, p. 6). For example, case studies of history teaching in Poland, Romania, and Lithuania—three postsocialist

nations—examined challenges associated with the revision of socialist history curricula and explained why “a total overhaul” of history teaching was an “absolute necessity” in Central and Eastern Europe (Shafer, 1992, p. 7). In parallel, case studies of Denmark and Switzerland put history curricula reform in a broader perspective by emphasizing the importance of “combining or interrelating of local history with national, European, and world history” (p. 6). The journal issue was an attempt to introduce a comparative analysis of history curricula (and specific subject matter in syllabi) across different nations, while framing the analysis within the larger debates of the role of history teaching in constructing a new European identity and a new European education space—themes that echoed throughout the journal during the following decades (see Table 4).

After 1989, the journal continued to explore postsocialist education reform on a regular basis, including a special issue on “Central and Eastern Europe: Work in Progress” (Lingens, 1999a), which appeared on the tenth anniversary of the collapse of the socialist bloc. Unlike previous issues that exclusively dealt with the curricula and pedagogical aspects of postsocialist transformations, the tenth anniversary issue provided an overview of structural reforms in the region, including decentralization, privatization, management, governance, and financing of education. The journal introduced the official findings of a Council of Europe study (Cerych, 1999), and contextualized broad education reform trends by introducing three case studies that examined the tensions of implementing new education reforms in practice. In particular, the individual-country studies of Romania, Poland, and the Czech Republic examined the values underlying postsocialist education reforms and the ways in which these reforms were being resisted by both the individuals and the educational systems themselves. Furthermore, case studies provided interesting discussion of whether the “the advent of political independence” meant “an end to cultural and economic dependency” for the former socialist countries, which were increasingly under pressure to implement externally articulated (and often externally imposed) education reforms (Safr & Woodhouse, 1999, p. 89). Once again, the journal demonstrated its commitment to placing the study of larger education trends in context in order to highlight the complexity and contradictions involved in implementing postsocialist reforms in specific national settings.

Education and the expansion of the European Union

The geopolitics surrounding the expansion of the European Union had a strong impact on the content of *European Education*. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the nature and pace of EU expansion in the early 1990s, the journal began a systematic analysis of the educational implications resulting from a proposed consolidation of the member states of the European Community. As early as 1991, the journal published an issue titled “Europe 1992: Education,” which brought together a collection of articles examining the role of education in developing a unified European market.⁴ As the European Commission (1988) explained, “the 1992 Europe will not be a fortress Europe but a partnership Europe” (p. 1), laying the foundation for cooperation in all spheres of political, economic, and social life. While “Europe 1992” (European Commission, 1988) was created as a strategy for external and commercial policy within the European Community, it had major implications for education policy and practice. In particular, the journal investigated how education could support the projected political and economic consolidation of Europe through the improved knowledge of foreign languages, increased student mobility, a better-educated labor force, and—more importantly—a firm identification of different member states with Europe as a whole.

While the issues published in the early 1990s set broad frameworks for examining the role of education in European integration, issues published in the late 1990s and early 2000s were more focused on the nuances of education realignment in the countries of the European Union (EU) and those aspiring to join the EU. As the former socialist states have articulated their interest in joining the European Union (in the mid-1990s), the journal readily responded by publishing several issues directly dealing with the educational implications of the EU expansion. For example, the journal featured such issues as “Exit the Soviet Union, Expand the European Union: Enter Educational Reform” (Lingens, 1997), “The Council of Europe: Education for Understanding” (Lingens, 1999b), “Toward a European Identity: Finding a New Paradigm for Teaching History” (Lingens, 2000), “Education and the Future” (Lingens, 2002), “Uniting Europe: Initiatives in Education” (Lingens, 2003a), and “Integration and Identity: Implications for Europe” (Bodine & Streitwieser, 2005a). The Bologna process,⁵ which was established to harmonize academic degree and quality assurance standards in higher education throughout Europe, created a space for cross-country comparisons. Although higher education had been a major focus of the journal since its creation,⁶ the Bologna process provided enough pressure for the journal to devote three successive issues, “The Implications of Competition for the Future of European Higher Education” (Charlier & Croché, 2007; Croché & Charlier, 2008) and “The Bologna Process in the new European Union Countries” (Kozma & Rébay, 2008), on the topic, something unique in the journal’s history.

Following the expansion of the EU in 2004 (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Malta, and Cyprus) and 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania), the journal’s geographic coverage expanded to include new EU member states. Yet its philosophical orientation and methodological approach remained the same. In the context of the increasing pressures for “Europeanization” in education, the journal continued to emphasize the distinctiveness and uniqueness of national education systems across Europe. In a double issue titled “Integration and Identity: Implications for European Education” (Bodine & Streitwieser, 2005a), the editors assembled case studies of education reforms in the former socialist countries to highlight tensions involved when nations embark on “recreating a sense of national identity and cultural heritage, on the one hand, while forging a new European identity and sense of collective purpose, on the other” (p. 4). Emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical context, Bodine’s & Streitwieser’s (2005b) editorial remarks were remarkably consistent with those of previous editors of *European Education*:

One cannot assume that there is a single transitional path to advanced democratic and market institutions. Nor can one assume that countries experience and deal with the legacy of postcommunism in equivalent terms. The ways in which each country . . . approaches educational reform speaks to particular social and institutional logics on national identity, European integration, and cultural heritage vis-à-vis region and history. (p. 6)

Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1969, [Western] *European Education* has run against the dominant current in the field of comparative education as defined by such bodies as the U.S.-based Comparative and International Education Society for nearly forty years. By insisting on returning to what at least some of its editors viewed as the geographic epicenter of comparative education, the journal kept Western Europe as a research focus in the field while many scholars followed the

funding to Soviet and nonaligned country studies. When a shift in methodology shook the field, *European Education* firmly rooted itself in countermethods. Occasionally, the journal attempted to push the field back toward historiography (especially under the editorship of William Brickman). During the cold war, the journal kept a narrow geographical focus in Western Europe and explored content in the “heart of education.” As the European borders expanded following the collapse of the socialist bloc, so did the geographic boundaries of the journal as it slowly reached into these new areas. Ultimately, *European Education* followed its original intention of pursuing cross-national comparative studies that were both contextual and qualitative. Throughout the forty years of its existence, the journal has produced powerful scholarship with a consistent vision.

The future of *European Education* rests on a historical understanding of its founding and of the contemporary geopolitical pressures in the academic world. Just as the geographic focus of the journal expanded after the imagined idea of European education space spread beyond the Iron Curtain, so too will the journal continue to explore new “European” states in Southeast Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Furthermore, the debate between scientific and contextual approaches in comparative education has not been resolved. Therefore, the journal will continue to provide space for this crucial academic debate in order to stretch theoretical and methodological boundaries of the comparative and international education field. Navigating this terrain will take scholastic skill, but ultimately will continue to produce scholarship advancing the field of comparative and international education. As the future of the field will inevitably include different geographical foci and shifting methodological and theoretical perspectives, the origins of the journal— and, by extension, the debates about the future of comparative education—will continue to have a place in *European Education*.

Notes

1. This geographic expansion of comparative education research was U.S.-based, not European-based. For example, comparative education research in West Germany was primarily focused on East Germany and other socialist countries. This narrow geographic scope of comparative education in West Germany was exemplar of the lack of expansion in the field throughout Europe, thus contrasting with the expansion in the United States.
2. Guest editors included Gita Steiner-Khamsi and William Dejong-Lambert, Joseph Zajda, and Tamás Kozma and Magdolna Rébay.
3. William W. Brickman was the first president of the Comparative Education Society in 1956, placing him among the most influential scholars in the field.
4. Europe 1992 was a program initiated by the European Community (EC) “to achieve a unified European market that would overcome the economic stagnation and unemployment of the early 1980s and improve the position of EC members in the global economy” (Hunter, 1991, p. 17). In particular, the European Commission proposed almost 300 specific reforms to reduce trade barriers among EC countries by 1992.
5. The Bologna process is named after the place it was proposed, the University of Bologna with the signing, in 1999, of the Bologna declaration by ministers of education from twenty-nine

European countries in the Italian city of Bologna. This was opened up to other countries, and further governmental meetings have been held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), and Bergen (2005).

6. In four decades, the journal devoted thirty-one issues to higher education. Most of the issues appeared before the Bologna process (1999), suggesting the different higher education models in Europe as a theme ripe for comparison across nations. Still, cooperation among universities has been a major area of research in the journal. William Brickman (1981a) explained in “Equivalencies and Equity in Education” the differences in terminology across Western Europe of the word “college.” He went so far as to explain the need for “academicians on admissions committees” to establish “equivalences in studies and outcomes” (p. 4), foreshadowing the Bologna process eighteen years later.

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