Comparative Education

The use of ideal types in comparative education: a personal reflection

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Available online: 21 May 2007

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The use of ideal types in comparative education: a personal reflection

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This essay focuses on the use of ideal types within different theoretical frameworks for the comparative analysis of culture and values. It emphasizes the importance of cultural agency, and the potential for enhanced understanding and the anticipation of future developments through exploring deep-level cultural patterns. The essay is written as a personal narrative, illustrating the way the author has used ideal types in three distinct phases of her work, and the insights that have resulted. It closes with an example of the use of ideal types for envisaging preferred futures in the context of globalization.

Comparing cultures

Early comparative education scholars such as Michael Sadler and Nicholas Hans often made the point that what happens outside the classroom, the wider context of education, is as important a focus of study in comparative education as the educational process itself. Schools, colleges and universities are deeply influenced by the cultural context in which they are found, as well as by the economy which provides for them and the political system responsible for educational policies. In many ways culture constitutes the contextual feature with the deepest historical roots and greatest continuity; culture is also an arena of potential deep-level conflict as highlighted in the recent discourse around the clash of civilizations. In his influential textbook, *Comparative Education*, Nicholas Hans (1967) devoted many chapters to major religions as well as such secular systems of thought as socialism, seeing these as contextual factors essential for understanding education.

In the recent teaching of a course in comparative higher education, I was struck by how different is this literature from that of comparative education. One of the most notable of the distinctive group of scholars addressing problems of comparison in higher education has been Burton Clark. His sociological approach has tended to

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focus on structures of higher education, forms of academic power and distinctive types of higher institution, from the liberal arts college to the entrepreneurial university. This body of literature dealt mainly with western capitalist countries in its early development, with the inclusion of Japan as a kind of honorary member of the west (Clark, 1978, 1983, 1993, 1998). Perhaps this was because meaningful comparisons could only be made within a broadly similar socio-economic context. Work on socialist higher education and higher education in developing countries was more often found in the comparative education literature, with its tendency to give greater attention to the external contexts of education.

One influential work in comparative higher education that has focused on culture is Tony Becher's (1989) *Academic Tribes and Territories*, with an expanded and updated version co-authored by Paul Trowler (Becher & Trowler, 2001). The distinctive cultures of different university disciplines are explored, and the modes of inquiry identified with each. In an early essay about this research, Becher discussed the concept of culture in a thoughtful way, contrasting the commonly understood notion of 'high culture' as 'the development of the mind', associated with such classic writers as Matthew Arnold, with the anthropologists' definition of culture as 'the set of values, beliefs and symbols that govern the behavior of a society or social group' (Becher, 1984, p. 167). Becher points out how the cognate term 'cultivation', denoting nurture, growth and production, underlies both concepts of culture. In the conclusion to this essay, Becher notes that 'major gains in our understanding of higher education as a whole would accrue from a wider analysis than has so far been attempted of the similarities and differences between forms of academic life in advanced and developing nations' (Becher, 1984, p. 194).

When beginning my doctoral research in the late 1970s, comparing cultures was a major concern for me, as I wanted to focus on the development of modern higher education in China, a socialist country whose cultural traditions are completely different from those of the west. I was fortunate to be a student of Brian Holmes at the University of London Institute of Education. Holmes chose not to deal directly with the concept of culture in his work, yet he was deeply concerned with values in education, and his influential textbook, *Comparative Education: Some Considerations of Method* (Holmes, 1981), devotes four chapters to the use of ideal types as a means of exploring values. Chapter five shows how ideal typical normative models can be used to give substantive attention to distinctive value complexes in comparative analysis. Chapters six, seven and eight illustrate this approach by deeply thoughtful discussions of educational debates in Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union, that go to the roots of the differing conceptions of the good society and knowledge underlying education. The titles of these chapters—'Plato's Just Society', 'Dewey's Reflective Man in a Changing Scientific Society', and 'The Ideal Typical Soviet Man'—give a sense of Holmes' approach to comparing cultures.

My four years of study under Brian Holmes were taken up with a struggle to understand the multi-faceted ways in which both normative and institutional ideal types could be used for the identification and analysis of educational problems within and across different societies. In the first chapter of his textbook, Holmes explains the

intellectual influences under which he grew up as a scholar, and the choice he made of Karl Popper's critical dualism over Karl Manheim's ideas of total democratic planning (Holmes, 1981, p. 3). Holmes's use of ideal types in comparative education research were clearly linked to his commitment to critical dualism and to the Kantian distinction between facts and values. Scholarship was expected to develop detached analyses which could predict the outcomes of different value choices and policy directions in specific contexts, yet abstain from any substantive discussion of preferred values.

Under Holmes' guidance, my doctoral thesis work was carried out within the framework of critical dualism. Yet as soon as I moved into postdoctoral work, I found myself frustrated by its limitations. It could take value complexes into account, yet could not contribute to a substantive discussion about preferred values. My deepening exposure to a Chinese intellectual universe, which had always integrated normative considerations into its understanding of scholarship and had embraced Marxism as a framework for both understanding and liberatory action, contributed to this disease. I could not accept the historical determinism of the Marxist position, yet was delighted to stumble upon the work of such non-Marxist socialists as Johann Galtung, Ali Mazrui, Ashis Nandy, Samuel Kim and many others in the loosely organized World Order Models Project (WOMP). They believed scholarship should and could bring forth models of preferred futures.

The second phase of my work thus proceeded within a framework which might be defined as value explicit rather than value neutral. I believe the resources from the civilizations of India, Africa and the Middle East, which underlay the visioning of WOMP scholars, helped build a bridge to a deepening communication with China. The comparing of cultures which occurred within this framework brought to light clear value choices, and uncovered some of the hidden spiritual resources which could support moves towards a preferred future.

The third phase of my work has been concerned with the dialogue among civilizations that emerged after the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The rich cultural resources of diverse civilizations, that had been given inadequate attention during the Cold War, have increasingly been recognized as fundamental to new ways of thinking about world order. I have also been influenced by the narrative inquiry of scholars such as Michael Connelly (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), as I have tried to delve more deeply into the educational values that underlie China's modern educational development and to reflect on the resources for education found in eastern civilizations more generally. From a Chinese perspective, this might be seen as a shift from the broad rationalism of the neo-Confucian school of principle (*lixue*), which emphasizes the accumulation of bookish knowledge over a lifetime (de Bary, 1960, pp. 479–481; Hayhoe, 2006, p. 29) to the more intuitive inner knowledge of the later neo-Confucian school of the mind-and-heart (*xinxue*), which calls for personal reflection on action and experience (de Bary, 1960, pp. 514–516; Hayhoe, 2006, p. 34). This essay traces my intellectual journey through the three phases depicted above, and explains how ideal types proved helpful in comparing cultures at each stage of the journey.

Its approach might be described as auto/ethnographic, in the sense that I am presenting a changing personal interpretation of ideal-types and their usefulness in comparative education research, rather than aiming to contribute to theoretical debates on the subject. Breuer and Roth (2005) comment that research in this mode 'pertains to the personalized, social, cultural and historical context'. 'There are no attempts to explicitly theorize the epistemic object for the purpose of generalizable results', they go on to say, but rather 'the interpretive flexibility of text itself is exploited with the possibility and intent to make a transfer to the readers' lifeworld possible' (pp. 425–426).

The purpose of the essay is thus more one of sharing knowledge with students and younger scholars than of adding to the store of knowledge in the field. It follows on the publication of a memoire (Hayhoe, 2004), which had in turn been stimulated by a seven-year process of studying the lives and contributions of eleven influential Chinese educators. In seeking to make their ideas widely accessible to educators in the west, I could not avoid a profound searching of the self (Hayhoe, 2005b, 2006).

Ideal types within critical dualism

Ideal types were, in a sense, invented by Max Weber. They were used in the brilliant sweep of his historical sociology to bring a careful and precise consideration of values into sociological analysis. He defined the ideal type as 'an attempt to analyze historically unique configurations or their individual components by means of genetic concepts' (Weber, 1994, p. 266). He noted that they should be constructed with a high degree of logical integration for adequacy of meaning. He made the further point that an ideal type 'has no connection at all with value judgements and it has nothing to do with any type of perfection other than a purely logical one' (Weber, 1994, p. 271).

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is perhaps Weber's (1958) most influential work, and here one can see a clear response to Karl Marx's economic determinism. Economic factors were certainly fundamental to the development of capitalism, but Weber shows how distinctive religious values, namely those of various sects of ascetic Protestantism, made a striking difference to the kinds of capitalism that took shape in different parts of Europe. These values could not be treated as mere epiphenomena, parts of the superstructure that reflect but do not influence the economic base.

Weber of course adhered strictly to a separation of facts and values in his academic work. In his haunting essay 'Science as a Vocation', he expressed this in the following way:

> it is one thing to state facts to determine mathematical or logical relations or the internal structure of cultural values, while it is another thing to answer questions of the *value* of culture and its individual contents and the question of how one should act in the cultural community and in political associations…the prophet and the demagogue do not belong on the academic platform. (Weber, 1994, p. 293)

In concluding his argument for academic neutrality, he commented rather sadly that 'The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by "the disenchantment of the world"' (Weber, 1994, p. 302).

Brian Holmes took a similar view. He endorsed critical dualism as the framework within which competing value systems or cultural complexes were to be compared and analysed. He believed that academics should be able to anticipate or even predict the outcomes of different choices, but they could not make a substantive contribution to deliberation over these choices. Science was neutral by definition, and could not guide the selection of preferred values, in his view.

Weber's fascination with the exploration of values in historical change led him on a worldwide search through ancient civilizations, including an analysis of the role of values in social change in traditional China. His essay on the Chinese literati depicts Confucianism as a philosophy 'which was bound to script, was not dialectical and remained oriented to purely practical problems, as well as to the status interests of the patrimonial bureaucracy'. In turn 'the social character of the educated stratum determined its stand toward economic policy…to let economic life alone, at least so far as production and the profit economy were concerned' (Weber, 1994, p. 146). The forms of asceticism in the Protestant ethic which had contributed so remarkably to modern capitalist development were lacking in the Chinese context, in Weber's view.

Weber's analysis fitted well with the ideas of Chinese progressive thinkers, both liberals and Marxists, who felt that Confucianism had to be rooted out, if China was to embrace science and democracy. This was the clarion call of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Liberal thinkers and university leaders, such as the famous statesman and university president Cai Yuanpei, wanted to see gradual political change towards democracy, supported by economic industrialization. Cai hoped modern Chinese universities could be places of theoretical debate, along Weberian lines, rather than of direct political activism. However, critical dualism was not easily accepted in China, nor did the economic and political crises China faced in the 1920s and 1930s allow time for gradualist solutions. Marxist scholars saw the need to organize for revolution, and some joined in establishing the Communist Party and launching a political struggle that led to the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.

This appeared to be a clean break with the past, both the Confucian past, and the capitalist past. The newly established Communist regime set out to eliminate all persisting influences of Confucianism as remnants of feudalism, and to transform the modern educational patterns and structures which had been established under the Nationalist regime between 1911 and the 1940s. The 1950s saw one of history's most ambitious projects of knowledge and technology transfer as the Soviet Union assisted the new Chinese government in creating the infrastructures for a modern socialist state. Toward the end of the decade the Chinese could boast of *Ten Great Years* (China State Statistical Bureau, 1973) in terms of economic development.

Why then were they plunged into a series of convulsive political movements, beginning with the Great Leap Forward of 1958 and culminating in the Cultural Revolution of 1966, which led to economic impoverishment and the destruction of much of the new education system? Could this be explained entirely in terms of

differences of political vision between the Chinese and Soviet leaders, or of intra-Party conflicts among the Chinese leaders? Were there not also some deeply rooted cultural factors which needed to be explored? One of the ironies of the 1960s lay in the fact that just as China threw itself into the frenzied destruction of the archaeological treasures of its Confucian past, Japan's rising economic power was being attributed to a Confucian ethic now seen by sociologists as having parallels with the Protestant ethic in European economic development. Weber's assessment of Confucianism was turned on its head, as the Japanese economic miracle spread to the 'four little dragons' of East Asia—Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea (Vogel, 1991).

These were some of the contradictions and questions that reverberated in my mind as I planned a doctoral thesis intended to anticipate the future development of Chinese universities and Chinese society at an important historical turning point. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping had announced China's opening up to the world with his policy of four modernizations and his plan for quadrupling China's gross national product by the turn of the century. What role would Chinese universities play in this process? How far would the deep-rooted cultural patterns of Confucianism reassert themselves? In what ways might they interact with the values and patterns of the various western academic traditions, which China had experienced historically and would once again encounter in this new period of openness?

In attempting to answer these questions, I decided on a comparative analysis of China's historical experience with academic models they had borrowed from Germany, France, the United States and the Soviet Union at different periods after 1911. Ideal types were a useful tool for handling the cultural comparisons involved in this study of nearly a century of social change, and for exploring the ways in which deep-rooted cultural differences had an impact on change. Normative ideal types of the human person, knowledge and society, developed along lines suggested by Holmes, were helpful for clarifying broad social goals in successive phases of China's modern political history. Institutional ideal types made it possible to clarify the core values of the four western university models, and to analyse the ways in which they interfaced with China's traditional academic institutions, on the one hand, and with the modern forms of higher education that had emerged in the revolutionary struggle on the other. The results were surprising, and showed how cultural value complexes rooted in history tended to persist, resulting in outcomes both unexpected and unpredictable in terms of political theory.

It gradually became clear that the European and Soviet models of the university, with concepts of academic freedom and autonomy rooted in European rationalism, had tended to combine with state Confucian patterns of hierarchy, intellectual authority and a scholarly monopoly of state administration. This was evident in both the Nationalist and Communist periods, in spite of the different political and economic systems. By contrast, American models of higher education and views of academic freedom and autonomy, rooted in the epistemology of pragmatism, had some overlap with Ming neo-Confucian ideas of intellectual freedom and local educational autonomy. The latter had underpinned the vision developed for higher education by Mao

Zedong and other progressive thinkers in the 1920s and 1930s, which was much discussed during the Cultural Revolution (Ding, 1996, pp. 234–239).

This analysis made it possible to understand the Cultural Revolution not only as an intense intra-party power struggle, but also as a reaction against the imposition of Soviet patterns of higher education in the 1950s, with their tendency to combine with the repressive side of China's traditional heritage—state Confucianism and the imperial examination system. It also made it possible to anticipate a fairly smooth integration of Chinese higher education into the international community after 1978, when American higher education models and values had come to have pre-eminent influence around the world. This was a consideration distinct from the geo-political, military and economic issues which have brought about recurring crises in US–China relations over the past two and a half decades.

At a recent conference at Fudan University in Shanghai, celebrating twenty-five years of US–China educational relations (1978–2003), I pointed out the fundamental epistemological harmony which has underpinned the multiplicity of educational initiatives between the two countries over this period. This cultural factor could be given credit for the lively and productive intellectual dialogue that has bridged the impasses created by successive political crises (Hayhoe, 2005a). It also gives hope for a future in which China is likely to rival the United States as a rising new superpower. The recent flowering of writing by such American philosophers as David Hall, Roger Ames, and Robert Neville (Hall & Ames, 1999; Neville, 2000) on the relevance of Confucian values to contemporary North America, and their consonance with aspects of American pragmatism and Dewey's communitarian notions of democracy in American thought, further illustrate this point.

My doctoral research was carried out within the strict parameters of critical dualism, with no intention to make value judgements, but simply to explore the ways in which a comparative understanding of deep-rooted values could enable one to anticipate future developments. It was also a matter of identifying cultural factors embedded in educational systems whose influences could not be easily predicted within theories of political economy. When I moved on to postdoctoral research, however, I found myself unwilling to stay within the framework of critical dualism. I was eager to find a way in which scholarship could contribute to a substantive consideration of values rather than the detached and neutral forms of analysis which Weber and Holmes saw as appropriate for university scholars. While my doctoral work had been based mainly on library and textual materials, China's opening to the world made possible much greater direct interaction with university scholars and administrators in China.

As I sought to develop a framework for evaluating the burgeoning educational relations between China's universities and universities in Japan, Europe, North America and Australasia, I wanted to move beyond the judgements about the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of particular forms of 'educational aid' that were common in the western literature of educational evaluation of the time. At the same time, I had reservations about neo-Marxism or dependency theory as a framework for the critical discussion of values, given their roots in an economic determinism which viewed

cultural and educational relations as reflecting the calculus of economic domination. Was there a middle way between these two opposite poles of scholarship? Part two of this article describes my search for a value explicit framework for comparative analysis.

Ideal types within a value explicit approach to comparative education

Brian Holmes adhered strictly to critical dualism in his own work, yet had also willingly taken on doctoral students who wished to work within the then popular framework of dependency theory. He suggested that this framework could be taken as an ideal type, and tested in specific historical contexts, to see how far educational patterns and relationships were indeed used to consolidate economic domination or political oppression. Ideal types are made to be broken, Holmes often remarked, and what does not fit the type may be more interesting than what does fit. In this he was following Weber's approach to Marxism—to take it as an ideal type, acknowledge its power to explain the emergence of capitalism, yet point out how it failed to account for differences in the forms of capitalism that prevailed in different regions of Europe.

With this in mind I organized a symposium at the 5th World Congress of Comparative Education in Paris in 1984, to test dependency theory as an ideal type in the historical experience of China's educational relations with major western powers. We included Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, the USA, and Canada, as well as Japan. We also looked at China's educational influences on Europe in both the seventeenth century and during the radical years of the Cultural Revolution, recognizing how resilient and self-assured were China's own educational and cultural values. All of the contributors to the symposium and the edited book that followed (Hayhoe & Bastid, 1987) took dependency theory as a type to be tested in China's historical experience with educational influences from diverse western countries. Could the educational relationship be understood as consolidating patterns of economic or political domination? The answers to this question were startling.

In almost all cases educational developments had in fact diverged from those of the political economy. Britain was without doubt the most important imperial power in China, having enormous economic influence, yet its educational influence was minimal. By contrast, both France and Germany had some success in using educational influences to advance their cultural and political presence in China, yet had relatively minor economic interests. In the case of Japan, educational influence pre-dated Japan's main efforts at economic, political and military domination by over a decade. It was initially welcomed by Chinese educators and politicians who felt they had much to learn from Japan's approach to modern educational development. Once Japan made clear its imperialist intentions with the infamous 21 Demands of 1915, however, China rejected further educational involvement and turned to European and American educational models.

The only instance where there was a clear alignment among political domination, economic influence and educational patterns was that of Soviet-Chinese relations in the 1950s. Yet the Soviet Union was a socialist, not a capitalist state, so breaking the ideal type of dependency theory in an even more fundamental way. According to

Lenin, imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, yet China's most bruising experience of the phenomenon came from its socialist neighbour.

In the process of this attempt to test dependency theory in the Chinese context, I discovered the writings of a remarkable group of scholars, who call themselves the World Order Models Project. Their work is usually categorized as part of the neo-Marxist literature by comparative education scholars, yet I believe this misses a significant aspect of their identity. Strongly socialist in their values and orientation, they are nevertheless non-Marxist socialists. Their belief in the transformative possibilities of initiatives in the realm of culture, communications, education and politics was clearly divergent from the Marxist emphasis on economic determinism. This could be seen in their efforts to support non-aligned nations with a New International Economic Order in the 1970s, and in the series of books they published envisioning preferred futures in the same decade.

Johann Galtung was the scholar whose work first captured my attention, as his 'structural theory of imperialism' (Galtung, 1973, 1976) so aptly explained the Chinese experience of 'Soviet social imperialism' in the 1950s, and the intensity of the backlash that followed in the Cultural Revolution. Ali Mazrui's striking article on the African University as a multinational corporation set forth real possibilities for meaningful cultural and educational action in a world dominated by models of higher education derived from European influence (Mazrui, 1982). Others included Samuel Kim (1984), Rajni Kothari (1974), Ashis Nandy (1987) and Richard Falk (1982, 1995). Up to the present the journal *Alternatives*, based at the Centre for Developing Societies in New Delhi, has continued as a forum for the visioning of more just and sustainable alternatives in many social, political and economic arenas. Unfortunately it is only rarely that an article on comparative education finds its way into that journal.

As I faced the task of developing a value explicit framework for the critical assessment of China's educational relations with Japan, Europe and North America in the 1980s, this literature proved crucially helpful. It enabled me to step outside of the technocratic evaluative frameworks commonly used at the time, which dealt with the effectiveness and impact of transferred knowledge and technology on the recipient society, and focus rather on the process of interaction. Efforts were made to measure how far the distinctive educational policies and practices of these countries supported equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation, on the one side, or exhibited patterns of exploitation, domination, fragmentation and marginalization on the other. These contrasting four-point value complexes were drawn from Galtung's work (Galtung, 1975, pp. 272–273).

An overall framework of evaluation was then sketched out in the form of two ideal types. The first worked out the logical consequences of forms of development in Chinese universities, and forms of interaction between China and western countries, that were informed by a respectful mutuality. The second anticipated the outcomes of new patterns of structural imperialism, such as those which had made the Soviet influences of the 1950s so intolerable to China (Hayhoe, 1989, pp. 94–99). Specific bi-lateral policies and projects were evaluated along the continuum between these two extremes. This made possible a substantive and value-explicit comparative critique of

a wide range of educational agreements and activities between China and countries of the industrialized world.

While the book that came out of these postdoctoral efforts (Hayhoe, 1989) did not leave many ripples in the intellectual waters of comparative education, it did give me a sense of personal satisfaction and a sound basis for extensive practical involvement in projects of higher education development in China supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank. When I was invited to write a second volume on Chinese universities in the 1990s, I used this value explicit approach to develop a culturally based understanding of education and social change over the century and to anticipate contrasting possibilities for Chinese universities in the move to mass higher education (Hayhoe, 1999).

One of the ideal types sketched out in the book's last chapter envisaged a form of mass higher education in China that is built upon both the progressive tendencies of China's neo-Confucian traditions and the passion for equity and participation that has informed certain external influences over the century, including aspects of Marxism. In this model women are involved equally with men, as students and professors at all levels of the system, and a flourishing of the social sciences and humanities rooted in progressive elements of neo-Confucianism ensures the cultural authenticity as well as the scientific independence of the Chinese presence in the world community. It is less hierarchical and more flexible and interactive than other East Asian higher education systems that share the heritage of state Confucianism, such as those of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The ideal type at the opposite pole, by contrast, is characterized by a sharpening of hierarchy in the move to mass higher education, and a resurgence of elements of China's state Confucian heritage which link knowledge to political power at the highest levels and repress critical and creative thinking in favour of authoritarian solutions to problems. Women do not participate equally but are concentrated in the lower levels of the system (Hayhoe, 1999, pp. 249–255).

Not long before this book appeared in Chinese translation in 2000 (Hayhoe, 2000a) the Chinese leadership decided to open the way for an extremely rapid move to mass higher education, with enrolments growing from 5.6 million, serving 7.2% of the age cohort in 1995, to 16 million, serving 15% of the age cohort in 2002 (Hayhoe & Zha, 2004, p. 88). It has been gratifying to me to learn that the book's Chinese version has been widely read and provoked many debates and discussions among Chinese intellectuals, not least over the question of what kind of universities are emerging in China's new mass system, and where they can be mapped on the continuum between the two extremes sketched out in my ideal types. These are largely debates over culture and value choices within China, yet they are also a matter of comparing cultures. China has experienced many diverse cultural influences in its educational development over the century and has a remarkable range of cultural resources to draw upon.

Ideal types had made possible the creation of a value explicit framework for a critical assessment of higher education development in China. This assessment was not limited to the question of academic success, measured by international scientific

standards, but also considered issues of social equity and cultural authenticity. Yet I later asked myself how far these efforts emanated from a respectful and listening engagement with intellectuals and educators in China? The core value of mutuality was certainly appreciated and most of the field research carried out between 1987 and the mid-1990s was done in partnership with one or several Chinese colleagues. At the same time, I had a growing awareness of the limits of my own understanding of the deep roots of educational and cultural thought in China. Only with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the dialogue among civilizations, have ideas and values coming from other civilizations been taken seriously as resources for future global development. It has thus been important to learn how to listen, not a skill that has been widely taught in western classrooms.

Ideal types, comparative education and the dialogue among civilizations

Probably most of us can remember precisely where we were and what we were doing when the unthinkable news of the collapse of the Soviet Union reached our ears in September of 1991. Personally I had just returned to Canada and to the University of Toronto after two years as first secretary for education and culture in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. It had been two of the most difficult years of post-Deng China, with the aftermath of the 4th June tragedy creating a mood of pessimism on many university campuses, and cultural circles being subjected to intense political pressures.

My concern at this time was to create conditions for a cultural dialogue between China and the western world, and to build upon the programmes I had overseen at the Embassy in ways that would allow for a genuine dialogue to emerge between Canadian and Chinese intellectuals. I was responsible for a collaborative doctoral project which made it possible for about 33 doctoral students and young scholars from both countries to spend a period of study in the other, and for all to be jointly supervised by Canadian and Chinese professors in various fields of education. How were we to nurture a profound level of cultural and social understanding between the two countries, such that professors and students on both sides could experience mutuality in the cross-cultural learning and teaching opportunities that were a part of the project?

Under the emerging rubric of a dialogue among civilizations, I prepared a paper for a conference on the subject of universities, cultural identity and democracy, making comparisons between Canada and China (Hayhoe, 1992). Much of the literature of comparative higher education had focused on the higher education systems of the capitalist west. Political democracy and various forms of a modern market economy were thus assumed, while cultural differences were seen as factors responsible for differences of emphasis in the patterns of university curricula, and the organization of academic life. But how was one to make meaningful comparison between two countries whose social, economic, cultural and political contexts were so different?

One was a liberal democracy, the other a socialist state ruled by the Chinese Communist party; one was an immigrant society with a shifting cultural identity that

has been under constant renegotiation, the other a nation rooted in several thousand years of continuous civilization; one was a prosperous market economy, the other still a developing country by most economic indicators, in spite of the richness of its ancient civilization; one was a demographic giant, the other a very small country in terms of population, though located on a large land mass. Of course universities would play very different roles in these two societies, and their capacity to contribute to democratic development, to shape cultural identity and to affect their nation's response to globalization would be different.

As I tried to put together a framework for comparison and for mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of universities in the two societies, ideal types again proved helpful. In both societies, universities and university intellectuals were concerned about cultural identity and the assertion of cultural and intellectual independence, not only in the face of globalization but also with reference to neighbouring superpowers, the USA in the case of Canada, the former Soviet Union in the case of China. On the Canadian side it was possible to identify three different groupings of intellectuals—conservatives, liberals and socialists—aspiring to shape the university's role in culture and democratic development in different ways. Liberals tended to be closest to the political establishment, conservatives farther to the right, and socialists protected by academic freedom in the critiques they developed from the left. On the Chinese side, a parallel set of groupings could be identified, yet their relationships to the political establishment were naturally quite different. Socialist professors with membership in the Communist party were part of the establishment, while liberals carried forward an intellectual tradition developed before the communist revolution, and conservatives saw hope in the revival of aspects of traditional culture.

It was a fascinating exercise to identify influential intellectual figures on both sides, and sketch out their visions of knowledge and the human good in ideal types that highlighted these ideas. The Canadian philosopher George Grant's protests against the American empire in *Lament for a Nation* (Grant, 1995) and *Technology and Empire* (Grant, 1967) were set against the Chinese conservative philosopher Liang Shuming's (1977) seminal book on eastern and western cultures, which called for the reclaiming of the Confucian heritage in a China that was bent on all-out westernization (Alitto, 1986, pp. 82–134). The vision of Canadian liberal sociologist John Porter for Canada as a 'cultural mosaic' which could make a unique contribution to post-industrial society (Porter, 1987) was set against the ideas of the Chinese liberal thinker and university president, Cai Yuanpei, whose commitment to academic freedom at Peking university left a legacy of democratic protest that persisted throughout the twentieth century. Socialist academics in Canada such as Howard Buchbinder and Janice Newson, whose volume *The University Means Business* (Buchbinder & Newson, 1988) laid out a fundamental criticism of the Canadian establishment, were set beside socialist academics in China who had a completely different relationship to their political establishment.

There were limits to this sort of comparison, but it was a useful exercise in self-knowledge and reflection to think through some of the value complexes which shaped the lives of intellectuals in Canadian universities, and consider where they intersected

with those of Chinese intellectuals. It was modelled after the broad comparisons drawn by Holmes (1981) in 'Dewey's Reflective Man in a Changing Scientific Society' and the 'Ideal Typical Soviet Man', which had demonstrated how the identification of influential thinkers and the depiction of their core values in a succinct way could help to foster critically informed communication across cultures.

If we were to understand each other, as intellectuals striving to contribute to the public good in our efforts at teaching, research and service, yet located in university systems and countries that were so different, we needed self-knowledge as well as knowledge of the other. While Chinese intellectuals were putting forth great effort to support the nation's modernization, Canadian intellectuals were being drawn more and more into the discourses of postmodernism. Yet there were still academic voices on our side that warned against an over-hasty abandonment of concepts of modernization that had shaped our development. The voice which appealed most to me was that of Juergen Habermas, whose moving depiction of 'the jagged profile of modernization' in European development (Habermas, 1984, p. 241) was accompanied by a call for the reinvigoration of the cultural life-world and the revitalization of moral-practical and aesthetic-practical arenas of knowledge. Habermas challenged intellectuals to find ways of redeeming modernity rather than taking flight into the alluring territory of postmodernity. It was precisely in this endeavour that I felt there might be some fruitful exchanges between Canadian and Chinese intellectuals, as the Chinese embraced modernity, yet sought to avoid all-out westernization.

The metaphor of redemption has deep roots in western cultural and spiritual soil. But how might Chinese intellectuals define a parallel process for their society? What image would help them reflect on ways in which they could modify modernity's jagged profile and contribute to building an equitable and culturally authentic form of modern Chinese society? Would it be an image drawn from Maoism or from Confucianism, Daoism or Buddhism? Gradually, as I observed and listened to the group of senior scholars of education who were responsible for our collaborative doctoral programme, it became clear how deeply their educational ideas and scholarly lives were rooted in aspects of Confucian humanism. As I reflected on this, the metaphor of 'humanizing modernity' came to my mind as a way of understanding their educational efforts (Hayhoe, 2000b, p. 435). This was linked in turn to the neo-Confucian humanism of the sixteenth century scholar, Wang Yangming, who had integrated elements of Daoism and Buddhism into his School of the Heart (*xinxue*), and whose ideas had inspired Chinese progressive educators in the early part of the century (Hayhoe, 2006, pp. 31–38).

China's pre-eminent scholar of comparative education, Gu Mingyuan, has greatly influenced the educational reforms that contributed to China's dramatic economic modernization after 1978. His initial work was expressed entirely within a classical Marxist framework, reflecting his intellectual training in the Soviet Union during the 1950s. This made his ideas readily acceptable to the Chinese political establishment. However he later moved more and more to a focus on cultural issues, and a determination to recover elements of the Confucian tradition which he considers relevant to China's future educational development. The movement of his thinking in

this direction is clearly evident in a recently published English version of some of his essays, with titles such as 'Modernization and Education in China's Cultural Traditions', (Gu, 2001, pp. 101–110) and 'National Cultural Traditions and their Transformation' (Gu, 2001, pp. 162–181).

Meanwhile, Chinese voices from the diaspora have begun to introduce China's cultural heritage to the global community. The Harvard-based philosopher, Tu Wei-ming, has lectured and written prolifically on Confucianism, not as an esoteric philosophical tradition, but as a living system of thought, which may have much to contribute to the next stage of human development. Like Habermas, he has affirmed the positive dimensions of the heritage of the Enlightenment, while seeing the need for a humanization of modernity that might be seen to parallel Habermas' call for redemption. He sets out the possibility of learning in the Confucian way as an anti-dote to such values as instrumental rationality, extreme individualism, calculated self-interest, and an overemphasis on material progress and rights consciousness rather than spiritual development and the nurturing of social responsibility. A conscious appropriation of values from the Confucian heritage would serve to overcome some of these genetic constraints in the enlightenment mentality, Tu (1998, pp. 12–17) suggests.

The dialogue among civilizations is still at an early stage, but I have tried here to illustrate an approach to comparing cultures that focuses on succinct clarification of the ideas of influential thinkers through the use of ideal types. This assumes Becher's first definition of culture as the development of the mind, and may therefore be particularly suited to the university community. As intellectuals, we need both more self-reflection and more precise and careful listening, so that we can find a meeting ground with those who may be bringing new cultural and spiritual resources to bear on educational problems in the global community.

Conclusion: ideal types in an era of globalization

Recent literature in comparative education has identified a dialectic between the global and the local (Arnove & Torres, 1999; Crossley & Watson, 2003) and stressed the vital importance of the assertion of local cultures in the face of the homogenizing pressures of globalization. This essay has suggested that ideal types can be useful in highlighting the core values of alternative cultural systems, and that this can be done as effectively within a value explicit framework as within the framework of critical dualism where they first emerged as a tool of sociological analysis.

The potential future impact of Chinese culture on the global community is an obvious concern, given the increasing importance of the Chinese economy on the international scene. Yet the distinctive cultural values of smaller regions and countries are also essential to the maintenance of a healthy cultural diversity and may have important lessons that should be widely disseminated. Two articles in a recent issue of *Compare* provide an elegant exemplar of the use of ideal types within a value explicit approach to comparative education from the Caribbean.

The first article, written by Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor of Saint Lucia, sketches out a picture of the qualities of the ideal Caribbean person: multiple literacies, a high degree of social responsibility, a commitment to the full development of each person's potential regardless of gender, and an informed respect for their own cultural heritage as well as that of others. This type is then used as a kind of benchmark for quality in education (Louisy, 2004). In a responsive article in the same journal, an ideal type of a preferred future of the Caribbean as a knowledge society in the year 2050 is sketched out by Anne Hickling-Hudson, Past President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies. This type is then used to identify seeds of hope and promise in the present period, as well as educational barriers that might hold back the move towards this socially equitable and culturally authentic future society (Hickling-Hudson, 2004).

It is refreshing to see ideal types used in this way to sketch out the vision of a preferred future, and to highlight the cultural and social values which will define that future, thus defying the homogenizing forces of globalization or shaping them in new ways. There is no reason why this could not be done for many distinctive cultures around the world, bringing about a sense of empowerment for education as an important means of cultural and social transformation.

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