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Post-Cold War Studies in Education (I)

Guest Editors:

Gita Steiner-Khamsi

Columbia University

Teachers College

and

William deJong-Lambert

City University of New York

Bronx Community College

European Education

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Post-Cold War Studies in Education (I)

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About the Guest Editors

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William deJong-Lambert is assistant professor of history at the City University of New York, Bronx Community College. His Ph.D. (2005, Columbia University) dealt with genetic research and biology education in Poland from 1949 to 1956, and he has published several articles and book chapters on the topic of Lysenkoism. His research focuses on history of biological science during the cold war, and related topics, such as the eugenics movement.

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GITA STEINER-KHAMSI AND
 WILLIAM DEJONG-LAMBERT

Guest Editors' Introduction

There has been a noticeable proliferation of academic books and journals on the cold war published over the past several years, primarily in the social sciences and humanities. Historians, anthropologists, and scholars of English literature, for example, have described how the cold war transformed not only the topics of focus in their respective disciplines but also the methods of inquiry. Courses in women's studies or Native American history were accompanied by new approaches such as poststructuralism, and new fields such as area studies. Government funding, the enlistment of behavioral scientists in psychological warfare, or the use of academic research to inform foreign policy posed serious questions to academics in numerous fields and confronted academic associations with the question of whether remaining apolitical did not simply mean succumbing to politics. It is clear from these accounts that the cold war played a fundamental role in making these disciplines what they are today.¹ It is also clear that the impact of the cold war on the field of education is a topic that as yet has not been adequately addressed.

Education has become a popular object of study and ranks high as a research area that vividly illustrates how competition between the superpowers impacted domestic reforms, not only in the Soviet Union and the United States but in every corner of the world. For example, the issue of how the cold war affected school desegregation in the United States has produced a flurry of fascinating publications by everyone except educational researchers.² It is striking that there are even fewer publications by comparative education researchers who, by virtue of being in the business of analyzing education in other countries, were at the center of the bipolar world. One may cautiously state that educational researchers have fallen behind in their failure to take part in the intellectual debates on the cold war and its impact

on educational development in the 1950s until the 1980s. The twin issues of *European Education: Issues and Studies*, published in fall 2006 and winter 2006–7, are an attempt to begin accounting for this gap in educational research and to provide a forum for further study.

The first issue begins with observations by Harold J. Noah, a leading comparative education scholar with a lifelong commitment to research on the former Soviet Union. Next follows a trilogy on comparative and international education societies. The three articles, written by renowned scholars and active members of comparative and international education societies of the United States (Gita Steiner-Khamisi, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York), the Czech Republic (Eliška Walterová, Charles University, Prague), and South Africa (Anne-Marie Bergh, University of Pretoria, and Crain Soudien, University of Cape Town), replicate the tripartite division of the world in effect during the cold war. The authors investigate the professionalization and institutionalization of comparative education in capitalist (United States), socialist (German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia), and developing countries (South Africa). The case of South Africa deserves special attention, because several parallel systems and intellectual orientations within one and the same country were in place during the apartheid and cold war period. Nonetheless, each examination of comparative and international education development presented in this issue manifests the omnipresence of the absent Other. Finally, the period of the cold war concurred with the postcolonial period and shaped international organizations in education, especially UNESCO. The history of UNESCO has been well documented by comparative education scholars, most prominently by Phillip W. Jones and Karen Mundy. However, the impact of the cold war, that is, the race between the two camps for winning ideological support from the "neutralist" or "nonaligned" Third World countries, is severely understudied. William deJong-Lambert, comparativist and historian, has reexamined UNESCO in terms of the cold war for this special issue.

The articles in the first issue contextualize the emergence of development and area studies, international educational development, and international education in the late 1950s and 1960s. Even though all the contributions in this issue are deeply rooted in analyses of the past, we observe important parallels with the present. This applies especially to the situation in the United States, where the "war on terror" provokes numerous associations with the global cold war. For example, there is again talk of "critical languages" (Arabic, Korean, Chinese, Persian-Farsi, and Russian), with "advanced speakers" to be produced by the U.S. National Security Language Initiative. It is intended that by 2009 these speakers will be employed by the U.S. Army and

intelligence and government offices. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is now even talk of a New National Defense Education Act (New NDEA) that would channel a tremendous amount of government funding into education. As with the launch of Sputnik in 1957, September 11 was seen as an opportunity to tie education directly to national and global security issues. Federal expenditures more than doubled in the four years after the first NDEA of 1958 was implemented. In retrospect, comparative and international educational research greatly benefited from the infusion of funds made available after the Sputnik shock.

Precisely because the cold war helped to boost the professional field of comparative and international education in different countries of the political West, East, South, and North, it is hard to understand why researchers would turn a blind eye toward this vital era in educational research. Why are educational researchers in the political "West" so disenchanted with examining this particular historical epoch, given the significance of the cold war for the internationalization of education, improvement of U.S. race relations in education, and attention to development and area studies in comparative education? In contrast, the period of the cold war is a topic of great interest in the political "East," that is, former socialist countries that underwent major system changes in the 1990s. It would be a mistake to assume from this that the cold war had less of an impact on everyday life, politics, and science in the West. In discussions on the formative years of Western comparative education societies, the cold war is ignored in historical accounts to the extent that one might wonder what explains this reluctance. These twin issues are published at an opportune moment, given that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S. Comparative and International Education Society and the fiftieth volume of its journal *Comparative Education Review*.

Since we touch only briefly on methodological and theoretical issues, we would like to highlight two aspects of post-cold war research that are especially intriguing. First, as an emerging research field, post-cold war studies forces us to scrutinize the interrelation between domestic (e.g., school desegregation in the United States) and international events (e.g., vilification of the United States by the Soviet Union as a racist imperialist superpower). This particular method of inquiry, which attempts to understand domestic policies against the backdrop of larger transnational developments, is related to globalization studies in education.

Second, world-systems theory is not new to social and educational researchers, especially to students of comparative and international education. In line with Immanuel Wallerstein's initial publications, most enthusiasts of world-systems theory think strictly in economic terms and only secondarily consider political or ideological world-systems. Several European scholars

in comparative and international education have broadened the narrow focus on economic notions of world-systems theory. Antonio Nóvoa and Martin Lawn, for example, use the term "educational space" to address the creation of new allies and partners in the European Union or, more precisely, to capture the process of educational harmonization in countries of the European Union. Jürgen Schriewer, in turn, coined the term "reference societies" and identifies countries that have served as exemplars of emulation for scholars, politicians, policy makers, and others from another country. The concepts "world-systems," "spaces," or "reference societies" are key for post-cold war research. This particular research area renders visible the "situatedness" of educational knowledge. No doubt the production of discursive ruptures, that is, the creation of theories that are not only different but preferably diametrically opposed to existing (bourgeois) notions in education, was one of the most mesmerizing intellectual exercises of the past century. There was a need to develop a Marxist educational theory, a Marxist perspective on multilateralism, including one on the project of world peace, a Marxist comparative education, and so forth. Interestingly, both world-systems appropriated these arenas for themselves. It became an issue of great contestation as to which political system is the greater education state, who owned the project of world peace and international understanding, and which educational systems are worthy of comparison.

We have purposefully selected the journal *European Education: Issues and Studies* as a venue for addressing this topic. More than any other continent, Europe was a continent torn in two different directions ideologically. Also, more than any other English-language publisher in education and in the social sciences, M.E. Sharpe (founded in 1958) has made scholarship from socialist countries (Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, and others) known to an audience in the political "West" at a time when very few scholars were able to peek behind the Iron Curtain. Finally, the semicentennial anniversary of the U.S. Comparative and International Education Society is an opportune time to investigate the legacy of the cold war and to examine its impact on our field. The development and area studies turn occurred in the 1960s, at the height of the cold war. The turn is a legacy of the cold war that has, for better or worse, endured into the present. Therefore, understanding the context of its origin is essential.

Notes

1. See, for example, Noam Chomsky, ed., *The Cold War and the University: Toward an Intellectual History of the Postwar Years* (New York: New Press, 1997); and

Christopher Simpson, ed., *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1998).

2. Two examples are Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

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U.S. Social and Educational Research During the Cold War

An Interview with Harold J. Noah by
Gita Steiner-Khamsi

When exactly during the cold war did the U.S. fascination with the educational system of the Soviet Union begin?

I don't think it was so much the cold war as Sputnik that did it. The launch of Sputnik was a severe shock to the United States' self-image, perhaps almost as much of a shock as 9/11. Just as Americans couldn't conceive that there would be a massive physical attack on their well-being, their view of themselves as preeminent in technology and secure in their homeland was devastated by the successful launch of Sputnik.

There's another important similarity between the two events. As with 9/11, the perceived threat to the U.S. posed by Sputnik was hyped to serve political ends. Then, as now, the United States Congress and the White House showed their mastery of expediency. An event falls into their lap and they know how to use it politically. Sputnik was hyped as a huge political and media event. On 4 October 1957 the Soviet Union beat the United States in

Harold J. Noah is Gardner Cowles Professor Emeritus of Economics and Education and former dean at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. He edited the *Comparative Education Review* from 1965 to 1971, was president of the U.S. Comparative and International Education Society in 1973, and is an honorary fellow of the Society. He is a member emeritus of the U.S. National Academy of Education. He has published widely in the field of comparative education. A selection from his works may be found in his book (coauthored with Max Eckstein), *Doing Comparative Education: Three Decade of Collaboration* (Hong Kong: CERC, University of Hong Kong, 1998). His most recent book, with coauthor Max A. Eckstein, is *Fraud and Education: The Worm in the Apple* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

The interview with Professor Noah was conducted in South Africa on 4 March 2006.