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## MODERN EDUCATION IN 'NON-WESTERN' SOCIETIES IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD SYSTEMS APPROACH IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

CHRISTEL ADICK

**Abstract** – The mainstream of Comparative Education may be criticized from two directions: Firstly, for what we may call its overwhelming 'case and country-study tradition', which tends to neglect theoretical and integrative approaches of what should be the focus of attention: defining, conceptualizing and questioning 'human education' and its respective institutions and processes – the school, family education, adult education, etc. – as the *raison d'être* of educational science, of which Comparative Education is an integral part. Secondly, for largely ignoring education in non-Western countries, either by sheer omission of non-Western perspectives, experiences and studies or by the widespread tendency to separate non-Western realities into special branches such as 'ethnicity and education', 'educational problems of the Third World' or 'multi-cultural education'. The world systems approach to Comparative Education proposed here tries to remedy these shortcomings in that it offers, firstly, a radically generalized theoretical perspective, because it aims at a theory of the modern school as it emerges from a global and comprehensive concept of comparison. Secondly, it presumes that non-European countries are not the outside world to our or their 'European' or 'Western' experiences, but instead that they form an integral part of what in short is to be termed 'the modern world'. Hence non-Western societies have to be integrated into a truly comprehensive framework of comparative education, the object of which is to describe, analyse and understand the world-wide existence of structurally similar yet socially differentiated and ideologically distinct nation-state controlled education systems.

**Zusammenfassung** – Die Haupttrichtung der Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft kann zwei Ansatzpunkte zur Kritik geben. Erstens vernachlässigt ihre überwiegende Tradition der Fallstudien und Länderstudien theoretische und integrative Ansätze dessen, was eigentlich ihr Schwerpunkt sein sollte: die Definition, Konzeptualisierung und Hinterfragung 'menschlicher Erziehung' und ihrer entsprechenden Institutionen und Prozesse wie Familienerziehung, Erwachsenenbildung usw. als die grundlegende Aufgabe aller Erziehungswissenschaft, deren integraler Bestandteil die Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft ist. Der zweite Ansatzpunkt der Kritik ist die weitgehende Nichtbeachtung von Erziehung und Bildung in nicht-westlichen Ländern, entweder aufgrund eines völligen Fehlens nicht-westlicher Perspektiven, Erfahrungen oder Studien oder aufgrund der weitverbreiteten Tendenz, nicht-westliche Erscheinungen in spezielle Untergebiete abzuspalten wie 'Ethnopädagogik', 'Bildungsprobleme der Dritten Welt' oder 'multikulturelle Bildung'. Der hier vorgeschlagene Weltssystem-Ansatz der Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft versucht, diese Unzulänglichkeiten zu überwinden. Hierzu wird, erstens, eine radikal verallgemeinerte theoretische Perspektive angeboten, die auf eine Theorie der modernen Schule abzielt, so wie sie sich aus einem weltweiten und umfassenden Vergleich heraus ergibt. Zweitens wird davon ausgegangen, daß außereuropäische Länder nicht eine Außenwelt für unsere oder deren 'europäische' oder 'westliche' Erfahrungen darstellen, sondern daß sie stattdessen integraler Bestandteil dessen sind, was man abgekürzt 'die moderne Welt' nennen kann. Deshalb müssen nicht-westliche Gesellschaften in einen wirklich

umfassenden Rahmen der Vergleichenden Erziehungswissenschaft mit einbezogen werden mit dem Ziel, die weltweit verbreitete Existenz strukturell ähnlicher, sozial und ideologisch jedoch unterschiedlicher, staatlich kontrollierter Bildungssysteme zu beschreiben, zu analysieren und zu verstehen.

**Résumé** – Le courant majeur de l'éducation comparée peut être critiqué de deux points de vue. Premièrement, pour ce qu'on peut appeler sa tradition excessive d'études nationales ou d'études de cas, qui tend à négliger les approches théoriques et intégrantes de ce qui devrait être son centre d'intérêt, c'est-à-dire définir, conceptualiser et remettre en question l'"éducation humaine", ses institutions et processus respectifs (l'école, l'éducation familiale, l'éducation des adultes, etc.) comme la raison d'être des sciences de l'éducation, dont l'éducation comparée fait partie intégrante. Deuxièmement, on peut le critiquer parce qu'il ignore en grande partie l'éducation dans les pays non occidentaux, soit en omettant purement les perspectives, les expériences et les études non occidentales, soit par la tendance répandue qui consiste à diviser les réalités non occidentales en sections spéciales comme "l'ethnicité et l'éducation", "les problèmes d'éducation du Tiers Monde", ou "l'éducation multiculturelle". L'approche mondiale de systèmes de l'éducation comparée proposée ici tente de remédier à ces carences en offrant, premièrement, une perspective théorique fondamentalement généralisée, parce qu'elle vise à une théorie de l'école moderne tout en émergeant d'un concept de comparaison global, complet et général. Deuxièmement, elle présume que les pays non européens ne constituent pas le monde extérieur à nos expériences "européennes" ou "occidentales" ou aux leurs, mais plutôt qu'ils font partie intégrante de ce qu'on peut appeler en résumé le "monde moderne". Donc, les sociétés non occidentales doivent être intégrées dans un cadre vraiment général d'éducation comparée, dont l'objet est de décrire, analyser et comprendre l'existence de par le monde de systèmes éducatifs d'Etat structurellement similaires, mais socialement diversifiés et idéologiquement distincts.

### **The Necessity for Adopting the World-Systems Approach in Comparative Education**

Comparative Education has long based its insights on numbers of country and case studies of national education systems. In this tradition the diversity of developments, processes of expansion and systematization of modern education in countries such as the UK, France, the USA, Germany, the Soviet Union, etc., have predominated in the discussion. However, there are two dimensions which have been heavily neglected. First, Comparative Education rarely offers a truly comprehensive and theoretically sound approach towards understanding the broader and long-term historical and societal changes with which the origins and expansion of modern education were and are everywhere involved. Secondly, the history and the development of education in 'non-Western' countries have not yet been adequately linked to the mainstream of Comparative Education. They were either largely excluded from historical comparative educational research perspectives or separated into special branches such as 'education and (neo-)colonialism' or 'multicultural education'. Yet school learning belongs to those phenomena which are well known today all around the world. Even though not all children of school age are in fact enrolled, and even though schools differ in their equipment, and school

learning varies in its content and aims, one would find hardly anybody in the world who would not basically know what a school is. Schools around the world are very much alike. They follow a relatively standard, uniform set of pedagogical practices and institutional organization, especially if one compares them to other educational fields such as family education, socialization in peer groups, adult education etc.

The world systems approach in Comparative Education takes up the challenge of how to explain the historical emergence and worldwide existence of these similarly structured nation-state education systems. Instead of looking at the world as a sum of different countries and their relationships, social science has begun to see the modern world as a system with a historical dynamic and logic of its own, which may not be deduced from its component parts (cf. Bornschier 1984). This 'modern world system' influences social units operating at lower levels, e.g., social classes, states, firms, political parties, etc. To take the example of schooling: teachers' associations, education ministries, parents and their choice of school for their children, curriculum commissions, educational reform committees and the like, are all influenced by and depend on what we may term 'the world-wide discourse on schooling'. The term 'world system' then presumes the existence of a social system which encompasses more than the sum of single-state organized societies. Our modern world system is conceived as a decentralized yet hierarchical totality. The unequal development resulting from this structure is itself an essential element of the modern world system. For this reason quite a number of former dependency theorists (such as Arrighi, Amin, Frank and others) are now arguing with critical world systems analyses.

One way towards a more comprehensive approach in Comparative Education may be the search for "a 'general' theory of education that is valid for all societies in space as well as in time" (Le Thanh Khoi 1986:12 f). For such a comparison, categories such as people, ethnic and language groups, natural resources, modes of production, ideas and values, etc., are suggested, as well as the possible interrelations between these factors. The relevance of these and probably other factors in comparing, for example, expansion and systematization of modern schooling, cannot be denied. But it seems questionable to assume that the cross-section of various partial and local developments in education would reveal a hidden 'general theory' of modern education. On the contrary: for the sake of formulating a 'general theory' of education by means of comparison, a theoretical perspective which *precedes* the definition of categories for comparative designs and the compilation of data is indispensable (Schriewer 1984). The concept proposed here sees the different historical societal changes into which the formation of modern state-run school systems is interwoven as part of a process of global transformation (for more details cf. Adick 1992). It propounds that 'modern education systems' can only be adequately understood if taken as being an integral part of what has come to be called 'the modern world system'. With this it takes up the suggestion of incorporating world systems analysis into Comparative

Education (cf. Arnove 1980:48-62). But since educational research on the world systems pattern has hitherto largely neglected developments in the Third World, the perspective presented here seeks to highlight these aspects.

### **The Line of Argumentation of the World-Systems Approach and Some Empirical Findings**

Modern school systems may be characterized by some features which set them apart from other past and present modes of upbringing, teaching and education (Adick 1989a:44f). These are:

- a more or less differentiated school system with subdivisions into school classes, levels, types and graduation qualifications;
- teaching according to a prearranged curriculum;
- a systematic differentiation between teaching and learning, so that a professional staff of teachers appears before a class of school children at scheduled time intervals;
- a state-controlled, public, legal regulation of educational practice in schools, etc.

The achievements of modern school education for the individual and for society are illustrated by its qualification, selection and legitimation functions: the acquisition of sanctioned knowledge, rewarded with a certificate, becomes a form of cultural capital. This allocation of chances for a better life by means of the school seems to be basically legitimate in the sense that everybody believes in it. And what is even more challenging for analysis, this model of schooling is universally accepted.

How, then, may all this be summarized and explained? Important steps in the direction of how to explain the universalization of modern schooling have been introduced by the works of John Boli, John W. Meyer and Francisco O. Ramirez at Stanford University. Their world systems approach to modern education is based on the following premises:

Education as a social institution is a transnational, or 'world cultural', phenomenon, in precisely the same sense that science, technology, political theory, economic development, and a host of other phenomena are transnational in nature. By this we mean that what education is (its ontology), how it is organized (its structure), and why it is of value (its legitimacy) are features that evolve primarily at the level of *world* culture and world economic system, not at the level of individual nation-states or other subunits of the overarching system. (Boli and Ramirez 1986:66)

From their manifold researches one can summarize the following findings:

- Modern schooling in fact does exist world-wide. This might seem trivial because it has become all too self-evident for us today, but it needs to be

explained theoretically as much as do the differences between national school systems.

- All around the world, school education has expanded and continues to do so as a result of increasing enrolment rates, the tendency to implement compulsory education and increasing levels of education. This trend seems to be rather independent from economic, cultural and political conditions (including the factor 'colonialism'), with the exception of the respective starting point of the trend. For example, expansion in European countries in this century began from a higher level of schooling than in African countries (Meyer et al. 1977 and some further projects at Stanford University).
- State control over the modern school systems is - even if in different degrees - also a world-wide fact. It is documented by state-controlled offices or ministries of education, by public financial support for schools and by a state regulation of curricula, teacher training and diplomas (at least in the final stage). State control also manifests itself by the increasing inclusion of the individual right of education and the state's duty to provide education in national constitutions (Boli-Bennett 1979).
- The 'political incorporation' function (Ramirez and Robinson 1979) which is realized by modern education systems, culminates in the claim of a state-controlled compulsory education system. This holds true not only for the history of schooling in Europe; it is equally significant in the newly independent countries of the so-called 'Third World' with regard to their ideas of the contribution of general education to the process of 'nation-building'. Even if the newest developments may not finally be judged, there is no case known "in which national educational policy suggests even the slightest opposition to compulsory education" (Ramirez and Boli-Bennett 1982:30).
- Besides national and historical peculiarities which, beyond doubt, characterize the educational developments of a country or an epoch, it seems as if a long-term trend of convergence of national school developments exists (Inkeles and Sirowy 1983). Convergence patterns have been found especially in the structures of the modern school systems concerning state control, compulsory education and the right to education, public finance and administration. But they also encompass the articulation of types and levels of schooling, of diplomas, professionalized teacher training, the standardization of a set of knowledge into a syllabus and curriculum and its achievement-testing for certification purposes. In addition, the emergence of social disparity structures (gender, class, religion, ethnicity, etc.) in education is also to be found world-wide. These disparities reflect social hierarchies and power mechanisms in industrialized countries as well as in developing regions.

To present these findings as a proof for the new global 'quality' of modern state-run and standardized school systems should not, however, be mistaken for an uncritical and affirmative consent: the success story of the spread of modern schooling is not yet 'good' because it exists. It is, on the contrary,

part of a complex and contradictory world situation of the practice of mankind today and has to be criticized as such. Developments in the 'modern world system' produce the dangers of one-sided cultural and economical homogenization – in the Third World as well as in the metropolises. And education of the type practised on the global model of the modern school is part of this homogenization process to the disadvantage of traditional and non-Western cultures. But it may also offer possibilities for innovative, critical and transnational action in domains for which traditions do not have an answer. In short: education can only try to enhance the enlightening functions of learning in modern school systems, evoking responsibility and insight into the complex social, economic and cultural world situation.

The world systems approach briefly summarized in this section is not yet a fully developed theory. In addition to the points mentioned above, one would have to devote more discussion to some further topics such as the role of the individual state policy on education, which forms a kind of relay to the hierarchical and competitive world market structures in which school knowledge and diplomas have become a kind of internationally convertible 'cultural capital'. The historical (and universal) accomplishment of state control over the school would thus gain a different weight and interpretation, besides being seen as a struggle between church and state on a national level. – I can, for reasons of space, only hint at these points here without being able to develop them further in this article. – One point, though, will be taken up in the following section: the necessity of including the history and development of schooling the Third World as an integral part of the world systems approach in Comparative Education.

### **The Re-evaluation of Colonialism and the Spread of Modern Education in the Light of the World Systems Approach**

Discussions on education in non-European countries largely belong to corpora of knowledge outside Comparative Education: 'Traditional education' in non-European countries is mainly the concern of Cultural Anthropology. The intrusion of formalized, so-called 'Western-type' school-systems into non-European regions in the historical context of the European expansion belongs to the discourse on 'Education and Colonialism'. The contemporary educational problems of the so-called 'Third World' belong to yet another discourse on 'Education and (Under-) Development'. And finally, educational problems of children and people with non-Western cultural backgrounds living in Western societies are discussed under 'Multicultural Education'. All in all, these different corpora of knowledge exist largely separate from each other, and they do not form an integral part of Comparative Education. The pledge to adopt the world systems perspective in educational developments in non-European countries has to be seen as an effort to counteract this segmentation of scientific knowledge: instead of further compartmentalizations, it

advocates the inclusion of perspectives on traditional, colonial, developmental and multicultural education in a broad and comprehensive frame of reference of Comparative Education. In this light then, diverse findings gain new meaning and relevance vis-à-vis a new common frame of reference, which tries to answer the following basic questions: Why has formalized schooling of a so-called 'Western type' been virtually accepted by every non-European society in the last two hundred years? And what is the kind of formal schooling which has really been accepted and proliferated?

The main way of explaining the existence and the maintenance of the so-called 'Western-type' form of formal schooling in non-Western countries has been to interpret it as being their 'colonial heritage'. This view holds more or less true for a number of countries in which formal school systems have been installed and dominated by colonial regimes. But even though this was the case in many African countries, for example, the resulting generalized notion of 'modern education' in 'non-Western' countries as being 'Western' in type and a mere 'colonial heritage' has a number of shortcomings and oversimplifications. Firstly, it ignores the indigenous contribution to the adoption of modern schooling in these respective societies, and secondly, it interprets the resulting school situation as being – for better or for worse – essentially 'European'. The majority of the following evidence stems from various researches on the history of education especially in West Africa (Adick 1992). But there seems to be similar evidence from other regions (e.g., Craig 1981). It is advocated that the historical changes which eventually led to new forms of schooling in non-European countries should be evaluated, on the one hand, as being part of their own history (indigenous achievements and failures in the process of adapting to a new world situation), and, on the other hand, as reflecting world-wide and long-term changes in the history of education of mankind (the educational revolution from 'pre-modern' to 'modern' systems of schooling).

#### *Adoption of 'European-Style' Educational Institutions*

Former colonies, as well as those countries which adopted 'Western' formal educational institutions by their own choice, have since the era of independence incorporated and promoted national school systems of a kind known from the metropolises (Dias 1985). Not all of the non-Western countries had in fact been colonies, and not all modern-type schools in non-Western countries were initiated by Europeans. There were countries outside Europe which stayed politically independent (e.g., Liberia in West Africa, which was a so-called 'Negro Republic' from 1847 onwards). Others experienced no, or only very short periods of European colonial domination, like, for example, Ethiopia in Africa and various Asian countries. Again, yet other non-European countries imported and adapted modern, 'European-style' educational institutions of their own choice, like the well-known examples of Japan and China. Yet despite their different historical developments, they all show today remark-



ably similar structures of formal education. In all these cases we must look for reasons to explain the adoption of modern education other than 'colonialism' or pure 'European export'.

In addition, even in colonized countries we find examples of indigenous initiatives to establish 'European'-type education. In West Africa some such initiatives undertaken by Africans themselves – the opening of schools, the organization of literacy courses, Christian mission work, etc., – can even be recognized in times before colonial partition; and they are clearly present during the colonial period. And we may not forget that – besides the few European actors on the scene (mission and colonial teachers, headmasters and administrators) – the main bulk of everyday school work and the propagation of school education were carried out by the indigenous populations themselves. As one example we just have to call to mind the educational ideas and achievements of persons such as J.A.B. Horton (1835-1883) and E.W. Blyden (1832-1912), who ventured within West Africa and whose ideas centred on education for all and on higher and university institutions in Africa (Fyfe 1970; Adick 1989b). The conclusion follows that even in colonial societies, and more so in non-European countries with little or no colonial experience, the implementation of modern schooling must be analysed not only as an 'export' of a 'European invention' but also as an active 'import' and adaptation by the respective acquiring society. Because this is the question: is not the implementation and adaptation of an 'invention', albeit foreign, also a creative and self-determined innovation?

### *Abandonment of 'Pre-modern' Forms of Schooling*

Despite existing 'autochthonous', 'traditional' forms of formal instruction in non-European countries, the type of school called 'the modern school' in the long run overcame all 'pre-modern' institutions of schooling. Formal education in the sense of instruction which was separated from everyday life was known in many countries and for long periods before the days of colonialism. As such, we may recall initiation ceremonies with periods of ritualized instruction, age-grade societies with regular phases of controlled learning, and secret societies which propagated graded stages of knowledge amongst their members. In addition, in many non-Western countries regular formalized schools (e.g., Temple schools, Koranic schools) had in any case long been in existence before the advent of the European. Literacy, arithmetical, religious, natural and philosophical knowledge were transmitted to parts of the following generation through diverse forms of instruction. Regular instruction in institutionalized forms was neither a European invention nor was it an invention of just one human society. The new aspect brought by European expansion or sought after by indigenous adoption was not 'formalized instruction' as such but a new type of schooling as part of the project of national development in a new world context.

Within roughly the last one or two centuries (depending on the date of their joining the modern world system), all those different traditions of learning and instruction were dominated by one new type of schooling, i.e., by the principles of modern, state-controlled, professionalized, standardized, selective, general school systems. In the case of the previous non-existence of formal schools, traditional (autochthonous) education practices were mostly just ignored, largely pushed aside and supplanted by 'modern' school structures. Although ideas of reconciliation occasionally appeared and still appear (Carlson 1975), there are virtually no examples of really institutionalized combinations of initiation courses and regular schooling. In the case of pre-existing traditions of formal schooling, these were subsumed into the dominant 'modern' type of school, as was the case with some of the Afro-Islamic institutions under European colonial school policy (Adick 1992). Or, as was seen in nineteenth century India, indigenous Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and other rural, 'pre-modern' forms of schooling gradually "simply disappeared slowly and quietly" to the advantage of urban English schools (Di Bona 1981:214). In spite of the amount and quality of existing indigenous schooling, this decline was not a result of any planned policy from the English colonial regime in the sense that colonial English schools should replace the local school system. It resulted from a disruption of traditional rural life as part of the whole colonization process and its incorporation into new world market structures which "eroded the ability of the countryside to support schools" (Di Bona 1981:211). These processes of subsumption and 'disappearance' have to be seen in the larger context of the growing dominance of the modern sectors of the economy and society in the process of integration into the modern world society. In the course of time in virtually all non-European societies (as, of course, was the fact in Europe) the traditional forms of schooling were overcome by the structures of modern national school systems. This was done partly by colonial dominance and partly by indigenous affiliation to world-wide modernization processes.

### *Missionary Education*

Missionary education may not simply be equated either with 'colonial education' or with 'modern schooling'. Whereas the first mission schools represent one type of 'pre-modern' instructional institution, mission education under colonial dominance and under state control has to be counted in the 'private sector' in national education systems. All pre-modern, 'traditional' forms of formal education in Western as well as in non-Western countries were historically overcome by what has been called as a convenient abbreviation 'the modern school'. This was even the case with 'traditional' missionary education in former colonies. Although being 'Western' in origin, the first 'traditional' mission schools represented a particularistic as against a universalistic system of education, religiously reductionist as against generalized educational

objectives. As such they did not fit into the state-controlled model of a universalized 'modern' school system – not even in the hands of Western colonial state agencies.

Missionary instruction had often been the first type of formal schooling on the spot and sometimes long before colonial domination. And missionary education also encompasses numerous attempts at Westernizing the mission clientele by equating religious work with 'civilization' in the name of European supremacy. But regardless of the fact that they were the first on the spot, and regardless of their 'Western' origin and outlook, mission schools under colonialism were equally dominated by, excluded from or integrated, with varying degrees of administrative force, into a comprehensive state-controlled colonial education system, much in the same way as their indigenous counterparts such as Temple and Koranic schools. That they often more easily and more willingly succumbed to colonial regimes is no counter-argument as to the nature of their dependent educational work and the need to adapt to the colonial governments' administrative principles. In French West Africa all mission school education has been abolished since 1903; in other colonial regimes such as the British and the German, mission education was controlled by colonial grants-in-aid and mission schools had to follow various state regulations and school laws (for French colonial education see Bouche 1975; for British colonial education see Holmes 1967; for German colonial education see Adick 1981). From these various findings it follows that even though there certainly was quite an amount of congruence between the contents and values of mission and colonial or 'Western' education, the two may not be identified with each other.

### *The Expansion of Modern Schooling*

All non-European countries have advocated the perpetuation and expansion of modern schooling in recent decades, despite its allegedly 'colonial heritage' and 'Western' bias. The expansion of schooling facilities and enrolment rates does not seem to be directly linked with the political status of colonial dominance or decolonization. It had already begun in times before colonial independence, partly as a result of pressure from the colonized for better educational opportunities. And it follows a world-wide trend of educational expansion after the Second World War. However, the educational statistics of the last few years in some of the poor countries signal a possible decrease in school enrolments and quality (World Bank 1988; Fuller and Heyneman 1989), so that one could question the existence of a prolonged trend of expansion. The problem arises here of how to interpret this decline, either as a sign of crisis caused mainly by demographic and financial factors, or as a voluntary rejection of the modern school.

The expansion of schooling was often accompanied by reflections about its status as a colonial and in this sense 'Western' heritage. Many former colonial countries undertook policies of indigenization: European history

teaching was reduced to the advantage of indigenous history. European personnel were replaced by indigenous teachers, headmasters and professors. Textbooks were rewritten using materials and examples from the indigenous surroundings. In some cases European languages of instruction were replaced by indigenous languages, at least in primary education. But the indigenization policies which many of these countries advocated in order to counteract the supposedly 'Western' model of schooling did not basically change the structural features of their (even if 'inherited') school systems. And these characteristics are basically 'modern' in nature, with all their antagonistic causes and effects, even in the corrupted and unfulfilled way in which they occur under the economically and politically deprived conditions prevailing in so many Third World countries today.

The one real challenge to this statement may be the recent (and future) developments in some of the Islamic countries. One could argue that fundamentalist Islamic education systems do not fit into the so-called 'universal' model of 'modern' schooling, that they have instead built their school systems on the traditional principles of Koranic education. In reply I would ask the following question: Have they really forgone all 'modern' principles of schooling, e.g., professional teacher training, state control (itself under religious control ?), standardization of curricula, modern subjects and contents, selection after achievement (diplomas), etc.? Time will show.

### *Universalization of the Essentials of Modern School Systems*

The non-European countries, whether colonies or not, not only adopted schooling, but distinctly favoured a type of school in an allegedly 'Western' style, known as bookish, academic, impractical and disconnected from the requirements of everyday life. Anti-colonial and liberation movements have everywhere advocated more and better schooling after the model of their colonial masters. And as far as I know, nowhere was any non-school, traditional educational practice of instruction chosen as the general national education system in order to replace the 'Western' school. Furthermore, all those school reforms have never really been accepted which tried to abolish the 'academic' system offering modern knowledge, qualifications, world-wide accepted diplomas and professional opportunities in order to establish a 'ruralized', an allegedly 'indigenized' or 'adapted' form of instruction to local circumstances (for a further discussion see Bude 1984:19-81; Yates 1984). From this one can derive the conclusion that any school reforms, advocated by whomsoever, which tend to deny the possibilities of 'modern' education to the citizens of any 'modern' state, including the so-called Third World, were and are bound to fail.

From all these findings I suggest favouring the view of a *global* spread of 'modern' school structures, and of the *universalization* of schooling, as against the notion of schooling in the Third World as being a mere 'colonial heritage' and of an essentially 'European' type in nature and therefore being inappro-

pritate and having to be replaced by a different, a 'non-European' form of schooling. To put it in terms of the world systems approach: the essentials of modern school systems (e.g., the demand for education for all, professionalized teacher training, state control and finance, selection, diplomas, systematization, and others) – as compared to their 'pre-modern' forerunners and to any other existing educational institutions or practice (family, adult, peer group, religious education etc.), in Europe as well as overseas, – follow the same and thus 'universal' model of schooling. They are being practised worldwide, they dominate and monopolize the instructional sector of education, and they are to be characterized as persistent and resistant to basic changes such as attempts at 'de-schooling' or radical reforms. This should, however, not be mistaken for an uncritical consent. On the contrary, the modern school includes a number of inconsistencies and antagonisms, such as the contradiction between democratic and meritocratic principles in the allocation of chances in life by educational achievement and the reality of selection and social disparity structures created and maintained by the effects of schooling. But here again, while these contradictions perhaps do have European origins, they are not 'European' in nature. From this also follows the conclusion that a real, basic reform of modern schooling, or its abolition, has to be a *global* project. If modernization is a dead end, and if likewise modern schooling contributes to this, then we have to overcome it on a global basis. There is no special way out, either for the so-called Third World, or for Europe or 'the West'.

### Summary and Conclusions

The analytical perspective of the world systems approach in Comparative Education is a macro-analytical one, picturing the modern school as an educational institution of world society as it has developed over the last two centuries. It leaves many aspects of education and schooling untouched: questions concerning the contests and philosophy of education, its aims and values, the processes of school learning, the everyday reality of schooling in different national, cultural and local circumstances, the discussion of reform alternatives, and so forth. The world systems approach contends that modern school structures that are state-run, general, professionalized, institutionalized, selective, etc., have (at least in principle) everywhere supplanted, incorporated, marginalized, excluded – in short – historically dominated and overcome all 'pre-modern' forms and practices of education. And that the resulting national school systems everywhere monopolize the overall sector of instruction, relegating all other non-school, informal, non-formal, adult and other sectors of instruction and education to second place. The arguments put forward by the world systems approach help us to understand the modern school as being an achievement of a new world-wide and long-term change in the quality of institutionalized instruction and education of mankind. In this, 'achievement' and

'quality' may not, however, be taken affirmatively and uncritically in the sense of an unreflected ideal of progress, but as a constituent part of a contradictory and complex situation at the level of world society.

The main advantages of the world-systems approach in Comparative Education are to be seen in the following:

- It fosters a historically long-term perspective; this prevents researchers from over- or underscoring singular historical events and thus helps to evaluate them in a larger historical context.
- It adopts a comprehensive, global, rather non-Eurocentric perspective; thus it succeeds in integrating diverse developments into a common frame of reference and hinders precipitate labelling processes ('Western' vs. 'non-Western', 'exogenous' vs. 'endogenous' etc.).
- It centres around a theoretically well-defined object, which is how one can describe and explain the origins and world-wide expansion of modern school structures (and not 'human education' in general or any national or cultural particularities).

But what its main advantages are may also be its main methodological traps: speaking of 'the modern school in the modern world system' is a paradigm (Kuhn 1976). Scientific paradigms are meta-theoretical systems of plausibility and probability, i.e., constructions of scientific thought and reasoning. As such, they cannot be proved and they are necessarily circular in the structure of their argumentation. 'The modern world system' and 'the modern school' are not entities of themselves, but epistemological constructions of the human mind, bound to guide our cognition, interpretation and action. If we keep this in mind, then the tendency to over-determine (i.e., to interpret all developments with the stereotypes of 'global' processes), which may afflict the application of the world systems approach in Comparative Education, can be minimized. But contrary to other paradigms (e.g., radical cultural relativism), that of 'the modern school in the modern world system' leaves enough room for comparison and constructive action. If, for example, we are really connected in a world system, is it not high time to abolish the talk of 'Third World countries', and the denouncing of their school systems as 'European'? If our production system culminates in a capitalist world market which leads us to ecological disasters – is it not high time for a profound critique of capitalism, myths of progress and technological solutions instead of triumphs over the collapse of socialist regimes (which anyway, according to world system analysis, always were part of 'our' modern world system)? If the modern school everywhere acquired a strategic position in disseminating modern qualifications (admittedly with all their shortcomings) – is access to schooling (and not to minor literacy campaigns and the like) not a right of all the citizens of the world?

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