

THE USE OF THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS METHOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Questo articolo discute il metodo dell'analisi comparativa nel campo della filosofia dell'educazione e degli studi pedagogici comparativi. Le autrici mostrano che nonostante l'importanza di questi studi, non è emersa l'esigenza di creare un settore scientifico separato che, in altri termini, sia una filosofia comparativa dell'educazione. In pratica in ciascuna branca della conoscenza nelle scienze umane è possibile utilizzare il metodo dell'analisi comparativa. Il contributo rivela le caratteristiche del metodo dell'analisi comparativa; le autrici prendono in considerazione le connessioni culturali e interculturali negli studi della filosofia dell'educazione.

The present article discusses the method of comparative analysis in the field of philosophy of education and pedagogical comparative studies. The authors show that despite the importance of such studies there is still no need to create a separate scientific field of science, which, in other words, is a comparative philosophy of education. Practically in every branch of knowledge in human sciences it is possible to use the method of comparative analysis. This article reveals special features of the method of comparative analysis; the authors consider cross-cultural and intercultural connection in studies of the philosophy of education.

Parole chiave: B.L. Vul'fson (1920-2016); Filosofia dell'educazione; Studi filosofici comparativi; Studi pedagogici comparativi; Russia.

Keywords: B.L. Vul'fson (1920-2016); Philosophy of education; Philosophical comparative studies; Pedagogical comparative studies; Russia.

The reason for turning to the theme of comparative analysis as a method is the holding of the Round table dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Boris Lvovich Vul'fson, an outstanding Russian scientist-educator¹, comparatist, whose works are still

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¹ Boris Lvovich Vul'fson (1920-2016), Doctor of Pedagogy, has been a Soviet and Russian pedagogue, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Education. His studies at the Faculty of History of Leningrad State University were interrupted by the Second World War: taking part in the battles near Leningrad, he got a severe shell shock, and was treated for a long time in hospitals. He continued his studies after the war, and kept on studying in a Graduate school, while working as a history teacher at school. He was one of the founders of the Russian scientific school "Comparative Education", he studied the processes of development of education abroad, the philosophical and sociological foundations of pedagogical thought in the West Europe. Until the end of his life, he was the chief researcher at the Institute for Strategy of Education Development of the Russian Academy of Education. He is the author of several scientific works (about 200), including 12 monographs, and a fundamental textbook on comparative education. More than twenty of his scientific works have been translated into foreign languages. He is also author of essays on the pedagogical concepts of prominent Western scientists and thinkers of the twentieth century (J. Dewey,

well-known in professional scientific community at national and international level. The authors have been Boris Lvovich Vul'fson's colleagues, and had the opportunity to communicate with him and to discuss many problems of modern pedagogical comparative studies. The echoes of discussions and the opinions by Vul'fson will be described in this article, which to some extent can serve as methodological clarification for the specifics of comparative research methods and determining the range of their applicability in areas of humanitarian knowledge adjacent to comparative pedagogy, in particular in the philosophy of education.

1. Problem Statement

Pedagogical reality², new research in various branches of pedagogical science, in particular in the field of learning theories (didactics)³ and comparative education, the development of the methodology of comparative research⁴, more frequent use of interdisciplinarity – all this leads to the development and improvement of research methods. In this paper, the authors raise the question of the method of comparative analysis in two areas of education research: in comparative education (pedagogical comparative studies) and in philosophy of education. In addition, we suggest considering insufficiently researched, but relevant lines, in a certain way connected with the philosophy of education. Let us express them in the form of questions:

1. What is the relationship with each other between pedagogical comparative studies and international comparative studies of the quality of school education (PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), TIMSS (Trends in Mathematics and Science Study), in which Russia has been actively participating for more than thirty years and the results of which are currently evaluating the quality of its school education?⁵
2. Is it possible to use comparative analysis in two aspects: a) the analysis of the results of the mentioned international comparative studies for pedagogical comparative studies as a branch of theoretical pedagogical knowledge; b) the analysis of data from pedagogical comparative studies to improve the quality of teaching in Russian schools and, consequently, improve the results in the PISA, TIMSS studies (currently Russia ranks first in the PIRLS study). It is important

E. Fromm, J. Maritain, J. Fourastier, S. Freinet and J. Bruner) which discuss the influence of the ideas of these thinkers and scientists on modern international pedagogy.

² V.V. Serikov (2018), *Pedagogicheskaya real'nost' i pedagogicheskoe znanie. Opyt metodologicheskoy refleksii*: monografiya, Moscow, Logos, p. 55.

⁴ I.M. Elkina (2016), *O novykh didakticheskikh konceptah: rizomopodobnoe obuchenie*, in «Filosofskie nauki». Vol. 11, pp. 82-95, (p. 85); Ivanova S.V. (2015), *Didakticheskij koncept v epohu postmoderna*, in «Tsennosti i smysly». Vol. 3 (37), pp. 6-13 (p. 9); S.V.Ivanova, I.M. Elkina (2016), *Postmodernizm i kachestvo obrazovaniya (postanovka problemy)*, in «Tsennosti i smysly». Vol. 6 (46), pp. 115-124 (p. 119).

⁵ S.V. Ivanova (2016) *Sovremennye napravleniya komparativnykh issledovanij obrazovatel'nogo prostranstva*, in «Pedagogika». Vol. 7, pp. 106-110; I.A. Tagunova (2017), *Pedagogicheskaya komparativistika v kontekste ponyatij i podhodov sovremennoj nauki*, in «Otechestvennaya i zarubezhnaya pedagogika», 1-4 (41), pp. 41-53 (see pp. 43-44); I.A. Tagunova (2018), *Sovremennye pedagogicheskie funktsii v kontekste ih filosofsko-metodologicheskikh orientirov*, in «Pedagogika», 8, pp. 116-125.

⁶ S.V. Ivanova (2015), *O shkole budushchego iz proshlogo (O metodologii issledovanij akademika M. N. Skatkina)*, in «Otechestvennaya i zarubezhnaya pedagogika», 6/27, pp. 7-21 (see p. 15).

to note that such interaction has the goal to improve the quality of both scientific research and learning outcomes in practice.

3. Is it possible to converge the methods and positions of two sometimes artificially separated areas: pedagogical comparative studies and historical-pedagogical comparative research? In the methodology of pedagogy, such an answer is not clearly articulated; comparativist-pedagogues usually do not conduct historical pedagogical research, and historians of pedagogy, conducting this kind of research, do not call themselves “comparativists”.

2. Research Findings

At the very beginning of the 21st century, Russian philosophers A.P. Ogurtsov and V.V. Platonov carried out a profound and comprehensive research, in which the method of comparative analysis was successfully applied: this is the well-known monograph *Images of Education. Western philosophy of education. The 20th century (Obrazy Obrazovaniya. Zapadno-evropejskaya filosofiya obrazovaniya. XX vek)*⁶. This book doesn't describe reflections on the method, the authors declare that their goal is «to present images of education [...] to give a panorama of the philosophical concepts of education ... »⁷. Obviously, this goal cannot be achieved without comparative analysis, to which the entire book testifies.

It would seem that there is nothing to discuss further: there is a model, and a method exists. However, differences in the approaches of comparativist-pedagogues and comparative philosophers force us to talk about the comparative method in the philosophy of education, in which philosophers and pedagogues are engaged, in an interdisciplinary sense and taking into account the modern conditions of the functioning of education as an independent system and as part of society. In addition, attention should be paid to the fact that some researchers distinguish comparative philosophy of education as a separate branch of scientific and philosophical knowledge.

In particular, O.A. Beregovaya reveals this area as integrative, combining knowledge of comparative pedagogy, philosophical comparative studies, history of philosophy and for example history of pedagogy and education for the study of various philosophical and educational traditions of mankind⁸. Is this allocation advisable? Without such a condition, is it forbidden for researchers to use the methods and data of the scientific disciplines listed by the author? Let us note that philosophical comparative studies are also named among the historical branches, which, in Beregovaya's opinion, serves as a “methodological basis”⁹. However, this statement does not in any way make the justification of a special comparative philosophy of education for us convincing. Moreover, in continuation of her substantiation of this “new” branch of philosophy, the researcher gives general characteristics of the modern world, and at the same time refers to the designation of the features of social development, then to the definitions of

⁷ A.P. Ogurtsov, V.V. Platonov (2004), *Obrazy obrazovaniya. Zapadnaya filosofiia obrazovaniia. XX vek*, SPb., RHGI, p. 109.

⁸ Ivi, p. 117.

⁹ O.A. Beregovaya (2015), *Komparativnaya filosofiya obrazovaniya kak perspektivnaya issledovatel'skaya strategiya*. URL: <https://articlekz.com/article/11740> (date of access: 21.04.2020) [In Rus].

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

educational space, then to the “national-regional philosophies of education”¹⁰. However, neither the one nor the second, nor the third, nor the other in any way proves that the philosophy of education as a scientific discipline cannot consider the specifics of positions in this area in Western philosophy, Eastern and any other.

The author Beregovaya states that the need for a comparative philosophy of education was substantiated in the works of J. Dewey, T. McLaughlin, J.A. Milligan, E. Stanfill, A. Widiyanto, H. Zhang, J. Feinberg and T. Regan¹¹. We should notice that this is a rather bold statement. What O.A. Beregovaya proves in her own words: “In his article “Education, Philosophy and the Comparative Perspective”, T. McLaughlin draws attention to the fact that a philosophical approach to education needs a comparative tool and that a comparative approach to education requires a philosophical approach”¹². However, McLaughlin says about the philosophical and comparative approach separately, the need for comparative research is permanent in various areas and topics of research, but for this, the researchers are not offered to create its comparative branch as a separate field for each scientific discipline. We also believe that it is not necessary to establish this implicit and optional boundary by specifying a comparative philosophy of education. Nothing prevents the study of the ideas of educational philosophers from different countries, various philosophical trends. Comparison as a method is used consistently and productively by researchers.

However, one cannot but agree with O.A. Beregovaya that the comparative study of education today, more than ever, needs a philosophical content¹³. At the same time, the important question immediately arises: what should be borne in mind by the comparative study of education? In this regard, an example of comparative pedagogy will be indicative. Experts are well aware that the term “comparative pedagogy (education)” dates back to 1817, it was proposed by M.A. Jullien, a prominent historical figure, a “Father” of comparative education. Russian pedagogues and thinkers in the period before 1917, including K.D. Ushinsky and L.N. Tolstoy, wrote about foreign experience in education, but did not use the terms “pedagogical comparative studies” or “comparative pedagogy/education”.

As we know, Russian comparative education, which has become an independent branch of pedagogical science thanks to the efforts of Z.A. Mal'kova, B.L. Vul'fson and other comparativists, the scientific school of Z.A. Mal'kova - B.L. Vul'fson¹⁴, institutionalized in 2011 in the Institute for Strategy of Education Development of the Russian Academy of Education (Moscow, Russia), even since these recent times has undergone significant changes. B.L. Vul'fson is a well-known researcher and one of the founders of the Soviet scientific school of comparative pedagogy, known in the world (the authors of the paper had the opportunity to verify this in 2014 in Hong Kong: B.L. Vul'fson's textbook “Comparative Pedagogy” in Chinese is used in universities of China to the present time) - wrote about the formation of this discipline in the Soviet Union in

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*. See also T.H. McLåughlin (2004), *Education, Philosophy and the Comparative Perspective*, in «Comparative Education», 40/4, pp. 471-483 (see, in particular, p. 476).

¹⁴ O.A. Beregovaya (2015), *Komparativnaya filosofiya obrazovaniya kak perspektivnaya issledovatel'skaya strategiya*. URL: <https://articlekz.com/article/11740> (date of access: 21.04.2020).

¹⁵ Sravnitel'naya pedagogika: nauchnaya shkola Z. A. Mal'kovej, B. L. Vul'fsona (Rukovoditeli: S.V. Ivanova, I.A. Tagunova). *Institut strategii razvitiya obrazovaniya Rossijskoj akademii obrazovaniya*. URL: <http://www.instrao.ru/index.php/content-page/94-nauchnye-shkoly/2117-nauchnaya-shkola-z-a-malkovoy-b-l-vulfsona> (date of access: 07.05.2020).

the 1970s - 1980s. At the same time, he did not forget to emphasize in the 2000s that this scientific discipline was ideologized. The main subject of Soviet comparative pedagogy was the study of education in different countries. In the 21st century, approaches to Russian comparative pedagogy began to change. New technical opportunities (Internet) and facilitation and widening of international contacts have made descriptive, country-based comparative pedagogy not popular and insufficient. This begins to manifest itself in Boris Lvovich Vul'fson's works¹⁵. This is stated in the present paper and presentations by S.V. Ivanova, I.A. Tagunova¹⁶. The new methodological approaches were approved by Vul'fson in a written review for the article by S.V. Ivanova¹⁷ and a public response to her speech at a meeting of the Department of Philosophy of Education and Theoretical Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education in 2016.

Another nuance: the authors found a certain position in the Russian pedagogical science that there are scientists who study Russian pedagogy, and there are comparativist who study foreign education. However, scientific knowledge is supranational: it is not possible to achieve something new without knowing what is happening in the scientific sphere in the world, and not just in one's own laboratory. For example, an analysis of the methodology of the famous Russian theoretician in didactics M.N. Skatkin shows his deep knowledge of the scientific achievements and problems of Western education science¹⁸. We know the phrase of A.P. Chekhov, an outstanding Russian writer, who said that there is no national multiplication table.

These examples can be instructive when considering proposals for comparative subsectors of well-known humanities that already have comparative studies in their structure. In our opinion, which coincides with the opinion of a number of researchers in Russia and abroad, it is appropriate to talk about comparative methods, about the method of comparative analysis.

Thus, we believe that the presence of such a branch of philosophy as comparative philosophy, such a branch of pedagogy as comparative pedagogy, is quite sufficient. Reflections on the comparative philosophy of education have a right to exist, however, we propose rather to pay close attention to the method of comparative analysis, which solves the essential problems of many scientific branches and directions.

Comparative analysis is an optimal method for research in various fields of humanitarian knowledge: in philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, political science, economics, linguistics, etc. In the last twenty years, attention to comparative analysis has been steadily increasing, because in any field in the era of globalization, cross-country studies are extremely important.

At the end of the 19th century, E. Durkheim was in search of the main method for sociological research. Durkheim was concerned about the objectivity of the data used by the sociologist, because the researcher interacts with the research object and influences it. For the sake of impartiality, Durkheim suggests using comparative methods. In his

¹⁶ B.L. Vul'fson (2011), *Sravnitel'naya pedagogika: aktual'nye voprosy teorii i metodologii*, in «Otechestvennaya i zarubezhnaya pedagogika», 1, pp. 117-130 (p. 121).

¹⁷ S.V. Ivanova (2016), *Sovremennye napravleniya komparativnykh issledovanij obrazovatel'nogo prostranstva*, in «Pedagogika». Vol. 7, pp. 106-110; I.A. Tagunova (2018), *Sovremennye pedagogicheskie funktsii v kontekste ikh filosofsko-metodologicheskikh orientirov*, in «Pedagogika», 8, pp. 116-125 (p. 124).

¹⁸ S.V. Ivanova (2016), *Sovremennye napravleniya komparativnykh issledovanij obrazovatel'nogo prostranstva*, in «Pedagogika». Vol. 7, pp. 106-110 (p. 108).

¹⁹ S.V. Ivanova (2015), *O shkole budushchego iz proshlogo (o metodologii issledovanij akademika M. N. Skatkina)*, in «Otechestvennaya i zarubezhnaya pedagogika», 6/27, pp. 7-21 (p. 21).

work “The Rules of Sociological Method”, Durkheim writes that there is only one means of proving that one phenomenon is the cause of another: this is to compare the cases when they are simultaneously present or absent, and see if the changes represented by these various combinations of circumstances, that one depends on the other. When, on the contrary, the creation of facts does not depend on us, and we can only compare the facts that have arisen spontaneously, then the method used is indirectly experimental or comparative¹⁹. And he continues: “If, however, various techniques of the comparative method are applicable in sociology, then not all of them have the same evidentiary force in it”²⁰.

In the modern electronic National Philosophical Encyclopedia, “comparative analysis” is defined as a comparative historical research method widely used in social and humanitarian knowledge²¹. It is important for us that further it is said that “practically in all the humanities there are corresponding disciplines ... ”²². We have already spoken about this above, but the most significant statement, with which we fully agree, is the following: “The general theory and methodology of comparative analysis is being developed within the framework of philosophical comparative studies, which acquired by the end of the 20th century the status of an independent discipline in the structure of modern philosophy”²³.

Comparative analysis is possible when choosing one object and selecting characteristics of the object from different sides, in different conditions. It allows you to use a fairly large set of features, criteria, parameters. It is important that the application of a single set to an object depending on time, space, conditions, etc. allows characterizing the object with a sufficiently high degree of accuracy, the results are less susceptible to subjective influences.

In comparative analysis, its success is facilitated by conditions such as uniform availability, total volume, and parameters of the evidence base. The signs of the selected indicators and conditions, as, indeed, of the objects themselves, should be deeply justified. This choice (selection) requires proof by itself.

In other words, the method of comparative analysis has its own characteristics:

- It requires justification of the choice of objects of comparative research.
- It determines the positions for which the comparison will be realized.
- It needs specification of the theoretical and methodological approaches (reference point), with which the comparison will be carried out.
- It needs identification and description in advance the specificity of social, national influences on the formation of the object accepted for consideration.
- The difficulties of interpreting the results of the comparative analysis are discussed separately.
- The experience of conducting comparative analysis of the objects accepted for study is being studied.

Despite all the difficulties of using the comparative method as a tool for research, it has a number of properties that make it quite objective and convenient.

²⁰ E. Durkheim (1995), *Sociologiya. Ee predmet, metod, prednaznachenie*. Moscow, Kanon, p. 70.

²¹ Ivi, p. 72.

²² *Komparativnyj analiz*. Nacional'naya filosofskaya entsiklopediya (2011) URL: <https://terme.ru/termin/komparativnyi-analiz.html> (date of access: 21.04.2020).

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

In addition, in our opinion, it can be combined with a number of other methods of humanitarian cognition, for example, such interdisciplinary methods as the system-structural method, general scientific methods (observation, experiment, text analysis), etc.

A little was said above about the history of comparative studies in pedagogy, while in philosophy the comparative method is considered quite ancient, dating back to the times of antiquity. Its development and institutionalization in the twentieth century made it possible to develop a clear methodology used in research conducted within the framework of non-classical scientific rationality, in research of the humanitarian sphere. It is widely used in philosophical comparative studies, in particular in the philosophy of education.

In the first decades of the 21st century in the philosophy of education, there are trends associated with a clear awareness of the crisis in education as a reflection of the general crisis of modern society; the search for the ideals and goals of education; the development of new directions in the philosophy of education: hermeneutics, pedagogical and anthropological²⁴. Society is changing; therefore, the expectations of education change as well. Then there is a need to study the “alien” based on cross-cultural and intercultural dialogue. Speaking about the problems of integration and interaction of philosophical cultures in the light of the comparative approach, we should pay great attention and analyze the concepts of “dialogue”, “understanding”, “interpretation”, revealing parallelism and analogy in the development of various philosophical systems of Russia and the West²⁵. In this case, the comparative method becomes a tool, and comparative studies turn to be the basis for the interpretation of the results obtained, the basis for comparing different cultures. However, we are not talking about “reconciliation” of positions in the search for some kind of a true knowledge. Various approaches, methods of interpretation make it difficult to understand the subject of scientific reality.

Entering into a dialogue, subjects strive to achieve a holistic view of various phenomena of reality (and they can be interpreted in different ways by scientific schools, adherents of various theories)²⁶. Compromise helps to identify the mechanism of interaction of ideas from the point of view of history and philosophy, helping to build the so-called “nomadic consciousness”²⁷. Metaphorically, the life of a nomad (from the Greek) can be described as constant movement, constant interaction, the use of all available resources to make life as convenient as possible here and now. Surviving in rather difficult (specific) conditions, he collides with others, who, like him, are nomads, too, opens up to new knowledge, new procedures, creates a kind of network around him²⁸. Thus, the “nomadic subject” of comparative studies can “move” in the historical-philosophical “field” not pretending to achieve the final version of universalism²⁹.

In terms of cross-cultural ties, the ascent to philosophical analysis allows the expression of certain cultural ideas and concepts in general philosophical categories. At the same time, the comparative method is the main one, but not the only one: both the

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ A.S. Kolesnikov (2004), *Filosofskaya komparativistika: Vostok-Zapad*. SPb, Izd-vo SPbGU, p. 259.

²⁷ V. S. Kotenko (2007), *Komparativistika – novoe napravlenie metodologii analiza nauchnoy deyatel'nosti i razvitiya nauki*, in «Bibliosfera», Vol. 3, pp. 21-27 (p. 25).

²⁸ A.S. Kolesnikov (2009), *Mirovaya filosofiya v epohu globalizatsii*, URL: <https://sci-lib.biz/issledovaniya-filosofskie-sovremennyye/mirovaya-filosofiya-epohu.html> (date of access: 05.05.2020). [In Rus].

²⁹ I.M. Elkina (2016), *O novykh didakticheskikh konceptah: rizomopodobnoe obuchenie*, in «Filosofskie nauki». Vol. 11, pp. 82-95 (p. 87).

³⁰ A.S. Kolesnikov (2004), *Filosofskaya komparativistika: Vostok-Zapad*. SPb, Izd-vo SPbGU, p. 306.

analytical method and hermeneutics, intuitive and logical play a role. However, all these methods are not an end in themselves, they support and make it possible to clarify philosophical research, work to identify the common in various philosophical representations of schools in different countries. Comprehension of the diverse traditions in the philosophy of education of different countries, the uniqueness and at the same time the value of each has an impact on its further development in modern conditions, the main characteristic of which is differentiation and pluralism, the strengthening of the influence of information technologies and the ever-increasing attention to global problems and risks facing before humanity.

Conclusion

The specificity of comparative analysis as a method of cognition in the humanities (in particular, in pedagogy and philosophy of education) shows its promise and expansion of opportunities in modern conditions. Currently, research on almost any pedagogical theme requires a comprehensive assessment of the problem in an interdisciplinary manner; selection of criteria and parameters in a wide range; understanding the conditions. And all this is based on data from different countries, sections of different strata of society, considering the geopolitical specificity and features of the global world. The foregoing testifies in favor of the development of comparative analysis.

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