

Preface

Nikolay Popov

Bulgarian Comparative Education Society: 25 Years of Being International

Thirty years ago: An important interview

Thirty years ago, in the spring of 1986, while writing my Master of Education graduation thesis on the history of Comparative Education, I had an interview with Prof. Gencho Piryov (1901-2001), one of the most prominent Bulgarian psychologists, who during his early academic years, in the 1920s and 1930s, was the most active comparativist in Bulgaria with more than 30 articles and 2 books in the field of Comparative Education. During the interview, Piryov told me about his first comparative studies, his visit to the International Institute, Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1926-1928, and his cooperation with such famous comparativists as Paul Monroe, Isaac Kandel, William Russell and others. At the end of the interview, I asked him: 'Prof. Piryov, could you please tell me what Comparative Education is for you?'. He smiled, thought for a moment and said: 'Comparative Education is my first love in science'. I was impressed by what passion, love and sentiment this 86-year old man was talking with about his 'first love in science'.

After that interview I decided to devote all my interests, time and efforts to the wonderful world of Comparative Education. And in the past 30 years Comparative Education has been my field of professional development, academic career, research, publications, international contacts, and all activities.

Twenty-five years ago: BCES establishment

Twenty-five years ago, at the beginning of 1991, I had active correspondence with Wolfgang Mitter, Raymond Ryba, and Erwin Epstein, who strongly encouraged me to initiate establishing a comparative education society in Bulgaria. Some months later, in October 1991, a small group of 12 people founded in Sofia the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES). Gencho Piryov was elected honorary member. Our aims were to contribute to the development of Comparative Education as a university discipline and research field in Bulgaria, and to become an integral part of the international comparative education community. In 1997, according to newly adopted higher education standards, Comparative Education was introduced as an obligatory discipline in all university teacher training programs. Five years later, those obligatory standards were abolished but despite that fact, since then Comparative Education has kept its position in the curricula of teacher training programs.

The BCES is very small. Regardless its size, the BCES performs a large number of activities and keeps close contacts with many foreign societies. In the past two decades the BCES has published or supported the publication of books on Comparative Education, Bulgarian education, and other topics. Organizing various events – roundtables, seminars, and conferences – is also among its activities.

The annual international conference is the BCES main event. The conference was organized for the first time in 2002 and since then it has been developed as an established, traditional and prestigious forum. The very large international scope is a typical feature of the conference. Colleagues from all continents every year come to this modest but high quality event.

This year's volume

Volume 14 of BCES Conference Books is published in 2 numbers. Number 1 of the volume contains papers submitted to the XIV Annual International Conference of the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES), held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 14 – 17 June 2016. Number 2 of the volume includes papers submitted to the IV International Partner Conference of the International Research Centre (IRC) 'Scientific cooperation', Rostov-on-Don, Russia. This partner conference has been organized as part of the BCES Conferences for the past four years.

The XIV BCES Conference theme is *Education Provision to Every One: Comparing Perspectives from Around the World*.

The book consists of an introductory chapter by Lynette Jacobs and 45 papers written by more than 70 authors. The papers are divided into 6 parts: 1) Comparative Education & History of Education; 2) Pre-Service and In-service Teacher Training & Learning and Teaching Styles; 3) Education Policy, Reforms & School Leadership; 4) Higher Education, Lifelong Learning & Social Inclusion; 5) Law and Education: Legislation and Inclusive Education, Child Protection & Human Rights Education; 6) Research Education: Developing Globally Competent Researchers for International and Interdisciplinary Research. The book also contains 14 abstracts of other papers.

May 2016

Prof. Dr.habil. Nikolay Popov, Sofia University, Bulgaria
BCES Chair, Editor-in-Chief, npopov@bces-conference.org