

Course Code: MED15303CR

Comparative Education Unit III

Biography & Significant Contribution of George Z. F. Bereday

George Z. F. Bereday is deemed to be one of the greatest figures in modern comparative and international education. Bereday was born in 1920 in Poland and died on Oct. 22, 1983 in the United States, the country in which he spent most of his career. He was one of the key founders of the Comparative Education Society (now known as the Comparative International Education Society - CIES), the field's first professional association. Bereday showed a broad vision in comparative education with research covering East Europe, East Asia and Latin America as well as an even broader comparative framework.

Bereday held positions as an exchange or visiting professor in many universities around the world. Getting his bachelor's and master's degrees in Britain, Bereday started his career as a comparativist when he pursued his doctoral degree in comparative education at Harvard University. He began teaching comparative education at Teachers College of Columbia University, where he spent most of his career. His contribution to comparative education was not limited to authoring foundational works and ideas but also included instructing renowned scholars in the field. Even so, he is probably best known for being the founding editor of plausibly the most influential journal in comparative education, the *Comparative Education Review*.

Bereday was author and editor of 34 books, among them *The Changing Soviet School*, *Comparative Method in Education*, *American Education through Japanese Eyes*, and *Universities for All*. He served as joint editor of the *World Year Book of Education* for 11 years. He was the author of some 100 articles in

journals covering such diverse fields as education, sociology, history, law, and political science.

In 1964, Bereday published his most eminent work in comparative education, *Comparative Method in Education*, which has been a classic work in this field. In this work, he stated that the aim of comparative education is to deal "with the imminent general forces upon which all systems are built" (Bereday, 1964, p.23). He contended that comparative education is multi-disciplinary and comprehensive. His thoughts on comparative education have influenced a generation of his students at Columbia University and beyond.

Bereday spent much of his career opening up comparative education as a field of study in the United States. He had a gift for defining areas of research for others to move into. To memorialize Bereday's work in comparative education and his role as founding editor of the *Comparative Education Review*, the George Bereday Award was initiated in 1981 by the Comparative and International Education Society to reward the most outstanding article published in that journal during the previous volume year. Bereday, with his scholarship and versatile leadership, had nurtured the field of comparative education, and his role in establishing comparative education as an academic field in the U.S. was profound.

George Bereday's Comparative Method in Education

George Bereday is considered to be one of the pioneers of comparative methods in education. According to Kidd (1975), Bereday's method is one of the best-known systematized approaches to Comparative Education, in which an educational system is viewed as a component within a larger cultural context. Bereday perceived Comparative Education as a political geography of schools whose task

was to search for lessons that can be deduced from the variations in educational practices in different societies. Bereday advised comparative educators to familiarize themselves with the culture of the societies they were going to study as well as guard against their own cultural or personal biases. In order to compare school systems, Bereday proposed a four-stage method.

Stages in Bereday's Comparative Method in Education

1) Description: In this stage, pedagogical data from various countries selected for the study is collected and presented using tables and graphs. The data should be presented in descriptive form to facilitate further analysis at later stages. Bereday sees description of more than one educational system as the first step. One would ask: what is involved in description? The first step in the description is that a research worker has to collect primary, secondary, or auxiliary sources. Primary sources may be eye-witness accounts, reports, and the material that can be regarded as authentic and first-hand. The second step is to secure data for the description of an educational system by visiting the schools and other educational institutions themselves. While; the third stage is to record what one has seen. Finally, on the basis of the data available to the research worker, he has to establish certain hypotheses or tentative generalization.

2) Interpretation: The second stage is of interpretation which means the evaluation of pedagogical data of the country or countries being studied in terms of their historical, political, economic, social, geographical, philosophical and other backgrounds. This stage involves an analysis of the facts using methods of different social sciences. Bereday states that interpretation in this way-exposes school data to a test of social relevance. Finding the 'why' of it, he maintains, rather than the 'how' allows the researcher to start on the road of direct comparison. For example, the researcher could use perspectives from sociology to explain the

varying attitudes of pupils towards social science studies. No one should get the idea that sheer description is comparative education. In fact, it is not. Description will lead the enquiring mind to arrive at the conclusion, but it is necessary to recall that an educational system does not exist in vacuum. One can evaluate not only educational data but also their causes and connections.

3) Juxtaposition: it is the stage of preliminary comparison. It is an act or instance of placing things close together or side by side, especially for comparison or contrast. It can also be described as the state of being close together or side by side. In this stage, preliminary comparisons of facts and findings, concepts and principles are used to classify data and process the data. The criteria for comparability are also set out during this stage. The research worker here will establish similarities and differences in the data collected so far. The task of juxtaposition is really to allow the formulation of hypothesis for comparison.

4) Comparison: This is the final stage of Bereday's comparative method and it involves a final fusion of data from other countries for the purpose of comparison and to derive plans for action. The step also involves hypothesis testing. It is the stage of simultaneous comparison. We compare features in one system with those of other countries/ institutions under study. We take note of the similarities and differences and reason why these are as they are. Here we draw Suggestions, generalizations and conclusion. On the basis of the findings in the foregoing steps we draw conclusions and put forward suggestions for new lines of action. These findings are based on factors behind the similarities and differences, which have been observed.