

Global perspectives on primary education



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Introduction

Welcome to this free course, *Global perspectives on primary education*. The course is an introduction to comparative education studies, where you will begin to compare and contrast primary schooling around the world.

The content and activities of this course content are drawn from a range of education settings, educators and countries. You will look into classrooms and hear from teachers, teacher educators and policy makers. You will also learn about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the agenda for free, universal, quality primary education.

There are some glossary terms which appear in **bold text**. You can find definitions for these in the glossary at the end of the course.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [E309 *Comparative and international studies in primary education*](#), a compulsory Level 3 course in the [BA Hons Education Studies \(Primary\) qualification](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- know the basics about the field of comparative and international education studies
- understand the purposes of international goals for quality education
- develop the skills to compare and contrast education policies and practices.

1 Schools around the world

Comparative and international education studies is an exciting and interesting field. You'll start this course by watching a short film and then in the next section you'll look at a slideshow of images.

Activity 1

To start, watch a short film. In the activity in the next section you'll have the opportunity to look at a series of photographs of schools around the world and the children and adults in them.

Watch the 3-minute film and think about the questions below as you watch (you may wish to make notes in the box below).

- What do you notice about the age of the learners?
- How are the classrooms organised?
- Which classroom looks most like the one you attended?
- Which classroom looks most different to the one you attended?

You can pause the film at any time to look more closely.

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1: Schools around the world



Add your notes in the box below and then click on 'Save and Reveal Discussion' to compare your reflections with those in the discussion.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

This film was chosen to open the course because it shows the very wide range of learners, teachers and classrooms around the world today. The film begins to show us what kinds of comparisons you might make of children's education in different contexts.

In the film, you can look closely at some of the details of the children and the classrooms, for instance, at the kinds of clothes the children wear, how classrooms are resourced and decorated, and where the teacher places herself or himself. You can see how children are organised, for instance, whether boys and girls are sitting together or are separated, and whether classrooms are indoors or outside (one classroom is on the water). You can guess at the relationships between children and teachers, whether these seem to be warm and friendly or hierarchical and strict.

Clearly, some children and teachers have more, and better, resources than others. The film illustrates the great inequalities between the richest and the poorest countries in terms of education. There are of course differences within countries that you don't see by looking at a single classroom.

Yet, whatever the context, there is something inspirational about seeing children, young people and adults in the daily endeavour of learning.

1.1 Schools from around the world: a closer look

Now you'll look through a series of photographs of 25 classrooms around the world. You will recognise many of these scenes from the video you just watched, and there are more classrooms in different countries.

Activity 2

Have a look at the photographs on the *Guardian* website:

[Schools around the world: in pictures.](#)

Read the information for each photograph. After you have looked at the photos and read the information about each one, answer the following questions:

- What single image inspires you the most, and why?
- Which two countries do you think show the greatest differences in classroom organisation, and what are these differences?

You can, if you wish, make your own notes to answer these questions in the text box below. Your notes will be saved for you, so you can use them again at the end of this course.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The information with each photograph allows you to better interpret and understand learners and teachers, and what their classrooms are like. You learn, for instance, that the school in Minas, Uruguay, is a rural setting where children learn about milking

cows, planting crops and cooking. You learn that the setting in Manacapuru, Brazil is a tribal school for Indigenous children. The school in Harrow-on-the Hill in England has some famous former students including Winston Churchill and the poet Byron. These social, cultural and historical factors all influence the ways children learn and how teachers teach.

In comparative education studies it's important to keep an open mind, to reserve judgement of what's 'better' or 'worse' in favour of taking a clear look at what is similar and what is different. Key questions in any comparison are what makes education different in different contexts, and what makes it the same for all learners.

Now that you have had a look at some classrooms around the world, in the next section you will look at the different purposes of comparing education systems.

2 Primary education: why compare?



Figure 1 Children and their Learning Assistant in a classroom in Sierra Leone, Africa.

Comparative education studies, broadly speaking, has two strands: large-scale cross-national comparisons that use numerical data to evaluate educational outcomes and achievements; and small-scale empirical comparisons (evidence gathered through first-hand observations, interviews or conversations) of teaching and learning in classrooms. Both approaches are valid, depending on what you wish to find out. In this course, you will learn a bit about each strand.

2.1 Different purposes of comparative education studies

Education is a rich site for comparative study because, as the comparativist Harold Noah noted, it is the 'touchstone' of any society (Noah, 1986, pp. 553–4): a standard by which a society is judged, where we find its core values embedded, and where such values may be examined and challenged. The comparative scholar Mark Bray has written about the different actors and the wide and varied purposes of comparative education studies, for instance:

1. Parents commonly compare schools and systems of education in search of the institutions which will serve their children's needs most effectively.
2. Practitioners, including school principals and teachers, make comparisons in order to improve the operation of their institutions.
3. Policy makers in individual countries examine education systems elsewhere in order to identify ways to achieve social, political and other objectives in their own settings;
4. International agencies compare patterns in different countries in order to improve the advice they give to national governments and others.
5. Academics undertake comparisons in order to improve understanding of both the forces which shape education systems and processes in different

settings, and of the impact of education systems and processes on social and other development.

(Bray, 2007, pp. 15–16)

A sixth important purpose of comparative studies is to improve knowledge and skills for effective teaching that will help children reach their full potential.

2.2 Ranking purposes

Look again at the six purposes of comparative study of education.

Activity 3

How would you rank them yourself? Use the interactive table below to rank the purposes in terms of their importance, from 1 for 'not very important' to 6 for 'very important'.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Reflect and record. How did you decide to make your rankings? Did you draw on certain experiences, knowledge or evidence to make your decisions?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Each of the purposes listed in this activity has its own complexities.

Take the example of one purpose: 'parents commonly compare schools and systems of education in search of the institutions which will serve their children's needs most effectively'. Such a comparison may not be straightforward. Firstly, what evidence does a parent have to make a judgement? There will be hearsay, then there's a visit to a school and the perception (by both parent and child) of its functioning and ambiance. It may be possible to tap into the views and experiences of any known children who are currently attending the school. Finally, there are measures in the form of publicly available examination scores and performance tables, and also reports from school inspection services. Which of these sources of evidence are most likely to help in a parent's decision-making?

Likewise, practitioners, policy makers, international agencies and academic researchers will have their distinctive sources of information and knowledge when they undertake comparisons of education. Each of these actors will use different methods to gather and compare evidence. For instance, practitioners and policy makers may look for very different kinds of evidence of children's learning: the former may draw on observations of children's enjoyment or participation, while the latter might favour the numerical evidence of examination scores.

There is no single correct answer to these rankings. Your own ranking relates to your interests, values and beliefs. Other individuals or institutions will prioritise the purposes differently.

3 Primary education: the global context

It is likely that you are familiar with some version of a primary or elementary school system from having gone to school yourself, from the experiences of your own children or children that you know. In primary schools around the world, children learn to read, write and count. There are also distinctive cultural additions to curriculum: children in a rural school in Uruguay, for example, may learn how to milk a cow, primary school children in Vietnam perhaps learn etiquette, and children in Russia traditionally learn ballroom dancing. Perhaps when you were a child in primary school you learned something that was distinctive to your country in terms of its history, geography, culture or language.

Primary education or **elementary education** generally refers to the first phase of formal education for children between the ages of 5 and 12, with a national policy and curriculum created specifically for this age phase. However, around the world there are older learners in primary classrooms, where young people start school late due to economic circumstances or are kept back after failing examinations. 'Primary' children also do a considerable amount of learning when they are not in school, as they play at home and watch and listen to others in their communities. **Basic education** covers the primary age phase but can apply to learners of any age and aims to provide literacy and numeracy skills for life and work.

Early childhood refers to a distinct phase of development, from birth to age 8, encompassing nutrition and physical and emotional well-being as well as cognitive growth. This phase overlaps with primary education, since most children go to school at age 5 or 6. Early childhood education is often distinct from primary education, focusing on young children's social and emotional health, and learning through guided play and exploration (Figure 2). There is much interest globally in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Development (ECD), because children who experience high quality ECE are more likely to thrive and succeed in primary school. In many countries, education policy increasingly promotes a less formal, more child-centred approach in the early years of primary school.



Figure 2a and b Young children learning through play in an Early Years setting.

Around the world, the primary school curriculum is often described as 'the basics', that is, learning to read, write and count. But there are often many other aspects to school learning for young children, such as science and environmental or sustainability studies, history and geography, personal, social and emotional health, citizenship, physical education, creative arts and, often, learning a second or third language. Around the world, children are taught the same subjects in different ways. In some classrooms children learn

by memorisation. In others, children learn through exploration and play. In many settings it is a combination of both.



Figure 3 A classroom in India.

3.1 Global agendas

In terms of making comparisons, globalisation has made many aspects of education more similar around the world. For example, a comparative study of early childhood education in Japan, the US and China (Tobin, 2011) found that over a generation these curricula became MORE alike owing to the global spread of progressive educational theories and child-centred teaching approaches. However, the curriculum of early childhood and primary schooling, and ways of teaching the curriculum, vary depending on cultural norms, traditions, history and national expectations. Tobin also found the three curricula in his study became LESS alike in other ways, as cultural heritages unique to each nation flourished and became embedded in school practices.

Much education policy research today compares information such as the number of children enrolled or completing their education. This reflects the modern aim of achieving free, universal and compulsory primary education, which was established in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The ambition to achieve free and compulsory primary education for all children has been defined and specified through a series of international agendas and targets. The Education For All movement was launched in 1990 and had a goal of achieving universal primary education by 2000 through increasing school enrolments. While much progress was made, this goal had not been achieved by 2000, when the World Education Forum (WEF) renewed the call to eliminate all barriers to children's education:

For the millions of children who live in poverty, who suffer multiple disadvantages, there must be an unequivocal commitment that education be free of tuition and other fees, and that everything possible be done to reduce or

eliminate costs such as those for learning materials, uniforms, school meals and transport.

(UNESCO, 1998, p. 15)

The Education For All agenda became part of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, one of which was to '...ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling' (UN General Assembly, 2000). This goal is yet to be achieved.

3.2 Sustainable Development Goal 4

UNESCO (2017) reported that in 2014, 61 million children of primary school age were not in school and 70 per cent of the global out-of-school population in primary and secondary education were in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. Of those attending school, many make less than expected progress in literacy and numeracy. The UN also raised concerns about attainment differences within countries: children from wealthier households were assessed as having greater reading proficiency than their poorer counterparts and those in urban areas fared better than those in rural areas.

Against the backdrop of these educational concerns, the Millennium Development Goals were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. SDG4 is about education.



Figure 4 Sustainable Development Goal 4.

SDG4 has the following aims:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

3.3 Progress towards SDG4

The UN's online Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform has information on [progress towards SDG4](#).

Today, the target of enrolling all children in school has been superseded by much more complex goals, including: the provision of quality education with effective and relevant learning outcomes, and safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. There has been progress towards aspects of SDG4, and these focus on access and participation. However, in 2017 there were still 262 million children and young people out of school. You can read more about the progress that has been made since 2016 on the UN's online Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (explored in the following activity).

Activity 4

Read the page entitled [Progress of Goal 4](#). You will need to read the information from all of the tabs. Then answer the following questions:

Based on this report, identify the findings in these areas:

1. What was the global primary enrolment rate?
 - 56%
 - 72%
 - 91%
2. Globally, how many primary school age children across the globe were not in school?
 - 44 million
 - 61 million
 - 93 million
3. As reported in 2018, what was the participation rate in early childhood and primary education in 2016?
 - 70%
 - 63%
 - 49%
4. In 2019, what was the percentage of trained primary teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa?
 - 25%
 - 64%
 - 88%
5. Worldwide, what percentage of primary and lower secondary age children attain minimum proficiency levels in reading and in mathematics?
 - Less than 50%
 - More than 50%
 - Nearly 100%

3.4 Quality and learner-centred education

As you have just learned, international education agendas today call for 'quality' education – not just enrolment of children in school or, to put it bluntly, 'bums on seats'. If children are enrolled in school, what kinds of experiences are they having there? What

does 'quality education' actually look like in reality? In the quality classroom, what are children and teachers doing?

In the global agendas such as SDG4's aim to promote and ensure quality education for all, there is increasing focus on pedagogy: the visible act of teaching and the discourses (ideas, theories and debates) which inform and make sense of teaching. National and global education policies often refer to learner-centered and child-centered pedagogy as an aspect of quality education.

In the next section, you will read about the core elements of learner-centered education.

3.5 Frameworks for learner-centred education

There are two frameworks that provide practical starting points to observe and evaluate the educational experiences of children and the practices of teachers. These frameworks have been developed from research in classrooms around the world.

Michelle Schweisfurth (2013, p. 146) has proposed a set of minimum standards for learner-centered education:

1. Lessons are engaging to pupils, motivating them to learn (bearing in mind that different approaches might work in different contexts).
2. Atmosphere and conduct reflect mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Conduct such as punishment and the nature of relationships do not violate rights (bearing in mind that relationships might still be relatively formal and distant).
3. Learning challenges build on learners' existing knowledge (bearing in mind that this existing knowledge might be seen collectively rather than individualistically).
4. Dialogue (not only transmission) is used in teaching and learning (bearing in mind that the tone of dialogue and who it is between may vary).
5. Curriculum is relevant to learners' lives and perceived future needs, in a language accessible to them (mother tongue except where practically impossible) (bearing in mind that there will be tensions between global, national, and local understandings of relevance).
6. Curriculum is based on skills and attitude outcomes as well as content. These should include critical and creative thinking skills (bearing in mind that culture-based communication conventions are likely to make the 'flavour' of this very different in different places).
7. Assessment follows up these principles by testing skills and by allowing for individual differences. It is not purely content-driven or based only on rote learning (bearing in mind that the demand for common examinations is unlikely to be overcome).

Drawing on Schweisfurth (2013), Wagner et al. (2012), Alexander (2009) and Wiggins and McTighe (2005), Mary Mendenhall and colleagues (2015) used a framework of 'core elements' of learner-centered education to observe teaching and learning in refugee schools in Kenya:

- meaningful and active pupil engagement
- inclusive and respectful learning environment
- differentiated instruction
- constructive classroom discourse
- varied comprehension checks and assessments

- conceptual learning and critical thinking
- relevant curriculum and language(s) of instruction.

No classroom will evidence all these descriptors all the time. Also, what constitutes 'meaningful and active' engagement and 'constructive' discourse will differ from classroom to classroom. Nevertheless, frameworks such as these begin to make the abstract concept of learner-centered education more concrete and real. The development and application of such frameworks that focus on the day-to-day interactions of teachers and children will offer practical indicators of quality education for all.

In the rest of this course, keep in mind the core elements of learner-centered education. See if you can identify the elements in the examples that you see and compare.

4 Making comparisons

In the activities in the following sections, you will look at examples of the two research orientations of comparative education: large-scale, cross-national comparisons, and small-scale interview comparisons. These two orientations are not always separate. For instance, large-scale surveys can be illuminated by small-scale case studies that give depth and detail to numerical data and ‘humanise’ the numbers.

4.1 Comparing national achievement outcomes

PISA is a global education survey of more than half a million 15 year olds in over 30 countries. The purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness of education systems, and how far children’s primary school education prepares them for educational success in post-primary education (bearing in mind that in many countries children can leave school at age 16).

PISA is carried out by the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**. OECD has produced a video to explain what PISA is and how it is used, which you will watch. The video states:

PISA shows countries where they stand – in relation to other countries in how effectively they educate their children ... It shows similarities and differences between education systems around the world.

Activity 5

Watch the 12-minute video about PISA.

First, view it without making notes to get an overall sense of the content and the graphic mode of presentation and explanation.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 2: PISA explained](#)



Then, watch it again, and ask yourself some questions. You can, if you wish, write notes in the box below and save the notes.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The video is about the purposes of PISA. It could be characterised as an unproblematic justification of PISA. Ask yourself how such data might be used by national governments and education policy makers. Would this data be useful, for instance, to a classroom teacher? Why or why not?

PISA tests are said to assess something more than the memorising of facts – they focus on how pupils use and apply the knowledge they have acquired. This is a commendable focus, but how far would you say that this is possible in a paper and pencil test? Give an example, if you can, of a paper test that measures the application of academic knowledge.

PISA brings together the educational systems of over 30 countries which are OECD members. But many countries are not included; these are the areas not coloured blue on the global map in the video – perhaps a third of the world.

The PISA finding that ‘home background’ is very significant for children’s educational success has a long-established research history. In countries where great numbers of children are disadvantaged in comparison to children in other countries, how far can schooling compensate or equalise for social, economic and cultural factors?

Next you will look at primary education with a close-up lens for a small-scale, qualitative comparison.

4.2 Comparing interviews

Qualitative research is about the nature of the thing investigated, and often involves the collection and interpretation of data that tends to be words rather than numbers.

There are two interviews for you to listen to. The sociologist Amitai Etzioni believed that comparison serves to increase our 'scope of awareness' (1969, p. vi). For this reason, you should examine and compare the two interviews. You may need to listen to the audios several times, and you may find it helpful to 'pause' to listen more carefully at each one.

In many parts of the world, primary school completion rates for girls are lower than for boys. This has an ongoing impact on girls' education, health and opportunities for employment. The UK's **Department for International Development (DFID)** is a major funder of development-focused research across the globe. DFID has prioritised funding for the education of girls in developing countries.

Comparing interviews: part 1

In the following ten-minute interview, Sally Gear, Senior Education Adviser at DFID, talks to Liz Chamberlain, Senior Lecturer at The Open University, about key issues for the education of girls around the world.

Activity 6a

Listen to this interview and then answer the questions that follow.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 1: Educating girls](#)

What are the issues that Sally Gear raises with regard to a worldwide need for a focus on facilitating girls' access to schooling and fostering their continued attendance?

Provide your answer...

What is the concept of 'wrap around needs' in relation to the socio-economic factors that can affect girls' attendance at school and their transitioning through a country's educational system?

Provide your answer...

What are the reasons why some countries may be reluctant to be included in PISA tests and the consequent ranking of shared results?

Provide your answer...

Comparing interviews: part 2

Sister Elizabeth Amoako-Athena is principal of Our Lady of Apostles College of Education in Ghana, with many years of experience of teacher training. Matha Josephine Apolot is a lecturer in Primary Education at Shimoni Primary Teacher Training College in Kampala, Uganda, and has recently begun working in higher education.

Activity 6b

In the following 10-minute interview, Elizabeth and Matha talk to Kris Stutchbury, Senior Lecturer in Education at The Open University, about **quality education** in Ghana (in West Africa) and Uganda (in East Africa).

Listen to this interview and then answer the questions that follow.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 2: What is quality education?](#)

What aspects do both interviewees believe to be important if there is to be quality education in Ghana and Uganda?

Provide your answer...

What emphasis do they place on teacher education and trainees' school experience as a means of enabling teachers being trained to provide quality in their teaching of pupils?

Provide your answer...

Comparing interviews: part 3

In the previous audio, Sister Elizabeth and Matha Josephine mention how their own educational experiences have played a part in their current wishes and designs for children in Ghana and Uganda. Our **early school experiences** can carry a motivational power in this way – some would argue that there should be continuity and tradition as with many public schools in the UK; others might seek something very different for children, giving them a change from what their parents experienced when young.

They also make much of the **role of teachers** in the realisation of quality education. They lay emphasis on empowerment of teachers, on applicants' entry qualifications, on the shift from standards (a required level of attainment) to competencies (what someone can do), and the importance of increasing the time that trainees spend in classrooms.

Such features of teacher training can be found in the policies of many countries, not least in the UK where some would argue that teacher empowerment has been put at risk by the way successive governments have specified, in some detail, what should be taught in primary schools.

Activity 6c

You'll now compare the two audios. Note your comparisons in the boxes in the table below.

Your comparison of the two interviews

Comparator	Sally Gear interview	Elizabeth Amoako-Athena and Matha Josephine Apolot interview	Same, similar or different?	Evidence for same, similar or different?
1. Views and purposes of schooling	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
2. Views of teachers	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
3. The stated priorities	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
4. Views on teacher training	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
5. Selection of learning outcomes	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
6. Views of difficulties faced	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
7. Another aspect of comparison that you have noticed	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

Discussion

The audios illustrate the way in which interviews can provide 'data rich', in that a small amount of audio can yield a great deal of qualitative information.

In completing this activity, you have carried out a small comparative study of education.

Next, you will hear from three teachers in Peru, Vietnam and Germany, and compare their perspectives on teaching and learning.

4.3 Teachers on teaching

In this activity you will hear from three primary school teachers in different countries. At the end of the interviews, you will make a comparison of their ideas and experiences.

Activity 7

Lucy Conde is a teacher with over 30 years of experience. As you watch the following 10-minute video, think about the areas that appear to be most important to Lucy.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 3: Lucy Conde](#)



Provide your answer...

Discussion

Are you surprised that her focus appears to be on aspects other than teaching and learning? She talks about children coming to school for love and protection, and that the purpose of primary education is to teach children to love themselves.

Lucy also mentions the importance of children being sufficiently nourished in order to learn well. This isn't just an issue in low-income countries. While teachers need to know a great deal about a lot of subjects, what Lucy emphasises is that successful teaching is much more than just standing in front of a class of students.

Activity 8

As you watch and read about Pham Thi Vi's experiences and perspectives, observe how she uses terminology like 'methodology' to explain her work. Listen as she explains the length of her teacher training programme and how her current school was also her training school, how long she spends in school and the time she starts her day.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 4: Pham Thi Vi](#)



Provide your answer...

Activity 9

In Germany, teachers spend five years studying a degree subject and a further two years learning to teach. Listen to Birgit talking about her experiences of teaching and compare and contrast her comments with those of Lucy and Pham Thi Vi.

Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 3: Birgit Gedicke](#)

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Did you notice similarities in the way that Birgit spoke about teaching compared to Lucy and Pham Thi Vi, or maybe you noticed some differences? For instance, Birgit comments on the importance of pupils learning more than one language and about the success the children enjoy when they can speak in a new language. The three teachers have different backgrounds and they all took different pathways into teaching. Birgit works in a much better resourced environment than Lucy and Pham Thi Vi, and Birgit has had many more years of formal education.

4.4 Comparing the teachers

What is evident from the teachers you have listened to so far, is that teaching goes far beyond being an imparter of subject knowledge and despite your geographical location, there is something that those who want to be teachers have in common. Something about the values they share and the job satisfaction they enjoy from being a teacher and working with children. Maybe you noticed similarities in the way that Birgit spoke about teaching compared to Lucy and Pham Thi Vi, or maybe you noticed some key differences.

Activity 10

Listen again to the three teachers talking about their practice, or read the transcripts (or refer back to any notes you have made) and make a small comparative study by completing the table below. It has been started for you.

	Lucy Conde, Peru	Pham Thi Vi, Vietnam	Birgit Giedicke, Germany
Number of children in class	Between 34 and 35 students	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Favourite subject taught	Communication and maths	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Route into teaching	Graduated from the Superior Institute of Education in Chincha.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Purpose of primary education	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	To establish basic knowledge for secondary school. To nurture moral qualities and develop skills.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Parents and the community	Few parents are involved because they work and live a distance away.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Other things you noticed	The impact of the earthquake on schooling.	<i>Provide your answer...</i>	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

4.5 Learning in different context: forest school and refugee camp

In the next activity you will see two contrasting examples of primary education.

Activity 11

Read the introductions about the two interviewees before watching the slideshows and listening to their comments about teaching and the learning in their schools. As you read, watch and listen, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you think what each school offers to the children is appropriate? Why or why not?
- Thinking back to the activities on quality education and learner-centered education, what would you identify as elements of 'quality' and 'learner centeredness' in each of these schools?

British headteacher Rory Fox runs a small charity called Edlumino, which raises funds to set up emergency schools in refugee camps around the world. In 2015 he set up a school in Faneromeni refugee camp in central Greece. First, watch the slideshow of images from Faneromeni camp and its primary school. Then listen to the interview with Rory Fox.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 5: Faneromeni Refugee Camp, Greece](#)



Audio content is not available in this format.

[Audio 4: Interview with Rory Fox, Edlumino](#)

Jane Williams-Siegfredsen trained as a teacher in England and went on to become a teacher educator. In 1990 she went on a study trip to Denmark, where she visited a 'nature kindergarten'. Since then, Jane has become a leading figure in the Forest School movement. First, watch the slide show of a variety of forest schools in Denmark. Then listen to the interview with Jane Williams-Siegfredsen.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Video 6: Danish Forest Schools](#)



Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 5: Interview with: Jane Williams-Siegfredsen, Forest School Pedagogue

Add your reflections to the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The two types of school described in these interviews could not be more different. One is extremely challenging and chaotic, where children are traumatised and teachers work with few – and sometimes inappropriate – resources. The other is highly resourced and child-led, where teachers have considerable freedom to plan and support children's exploratory play and learning. The activities in the Danish forest school are familiar to all the participants and are based on the country's cultural and educational heritage. The activities in the refugee camp school in Greece may be very unfamiliar to the children, and in a language they do not use.

But notice how, in both schools, the teachers are agile and adaptive to the needs of the children. And in both schools there is the same dedication of teachers to the children in their care, and the commitment of teachers to creating educational experiences that sustain children to grow and develop in a positive direction. In both schools teachers strive to provide quality, learner-centered education.

Conclusion

In this free course, *Global perspectives on primary education*, you have developed your knowledge about the field of comparative and international education studies. Hopefully the readings, audio-visual resources and activities have stimulated your thinking about teaching, learning, and making comparisons of education. Whether you are a teacher or you plan to teach in the future, or if you are interested in the field of education generally, hopefully you have enjoyed this course and it will help you to take your studies further.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [E309 Comparative and international studies in primary education](#), a compulsory Level 3 course in the [BA Hons Education Studies \(Primary\) qualification](#).

Glossary

Basic education

A range of educational activities that take place in various settings, both formal and informal, to meet basic needs. It comprises primary education and secondary education.

Department for International Development

A United Kingdom government department responsible for administering overseas aid and lead the UK's work to end extreme poverty.

Early childhood

A range of learning and educational activities underpinned by a holistic approach to support children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. The age of early childhood education differs across countries.

Early school experiences

Young children's early learning experiences in a formal education setting.

Elementary education

Also called primary education. Usually the first stage of formal education.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) aims to promote policies that will improve the economic and social wellbeing of people around the world. The 25 member countries span the globe, from North and South America to Europe and Asia-Pacific. They include many of the world's most advanced countries but also emerging countries like Mexico, Chile and Turkey.

Primary education

The UNESCO definition is as follows: Primary education provides learning and educational activities typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy), and to establish a sound foundation for learning and solid understanding of core areas of knowledge and personal development, preparing for lower secondary education. It aims at learning at a basic level of complexity with little if any specialisation (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/primary-education-isced-1>).

Quality education

UNICEF state that children have a right to an education, a quality education. Their definition includes: learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Role of teachers

Teachers' core roles is to educate children and young people by fostering their learning development. Beyond that, teachers carry out many other roles including nurturing relationships, supporting social and emotional aspects of learning, as well as being a mentor and guide.

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Further reading

Find out more about the [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#).

UNESCO also produces an annual [Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\) Report](#), which tracks progress.

In his interview, Rory Fox refers to the Unicef curriculum. Look at [Unicef's 'School in a Box' resources](#) for education in emergencies.

For more information about the UK Department For International Development and its work, visit the [DFID website](#).

The [UNESCO eAtlas of Teachers](#) provides visual and up-to-date data on a number of themes, including an overview of teacher data, women in the teaching profession.

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