Comparative adult education: issues and challenges with particular reference to Britain and Germany.

Towards constructing intercultural meaning and a new theoretical framework.

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Acknowledgements

Researching and writing this thesis has been at times a challenging, sometimes frustrating, but always stimulating, and in the end, a worthwhile and rewarding task. Not surprisingly there were many obstacles to overcome. Life itself has the habit of crossing the best laid plans. I, like many adult students in demanding circumstances, indulged in doubts and uncertainties before arriving at firmer aims and even conclusions. No doubt, in the course of time I have tried the patience of many friends, colleagues and, above all, members of my family who, nevertheless, gave me the support I needed.

However, I am grateful that, in the end, circumstances allowed me to pursue this study. I also appreciate the many helpful remarks and suggestions colleagues made, both in Britain and in Germany, which, at times, made me stop, think, explore different avenues and perhaps change direction.

I am particularly indebted to Professor Peter Jarvis, my supervisor, who steered me through this eventful time with considerable patience and encouragement. I have enjoyed the numerous stimulating discussions I had with Peter and benefited greatly from his extensive range of knowledge and experience, more than a few words on this page can express.
Abstract

This thesis begins with my own bicultural experiences in the context of adult education and language teaching and examines current issues in comparative adult education in light of the challenges imposed by increasing globalisation and lifelong learning. The first chapter ends with research questions about the validity of comparative adult education given that hitherto theoretical approaches have, it seems, ceased to be part of scholarly debates in adult continuing education. The following chapter proceeds to explore research methods appropriate to this study, which are based on approaches in phenomenology and constructivism, and which are explored further in chapter 8 in the context of comparative adult education. The study then seeks to challenge the appropriacy of comparing systems of adult education within the positivist paradigm which, it is argued, has stifled debates and not enabled alternative approaches to develop. Furthermore, it is argued that bounded concepts of nation states and national characteristics are no longer relevant in the context of a multicultural and multilingual Europe. Adult educators are increasingly engaged in intercultural activities by taking part in professional networks and EU-sponsored programmes, computer-mediated or not (discussed in chapter 5). These activities demand skills in cross- and intercultural communication and, in comparative terms, an understanding of different cultural communities. Chapter 6, therefore, looks at the role of language and interculturality which, it is argued, are fundamental to comparative adult education. Issues in relation to lifelong learning are explored further in the subsequent chapter with regard to Germany and Britain and the respective historical, structural and cultural contexts. Chapter 8 argues that comparative adult education can only be meaningful if new meaning and knowledge are constructed on the basis of intercultural communication and shared comparative reflection. This chapter also outlines a new theoretical framework, which, it is proposed, is appropriate to comparative adult education in its contemporary post- or late modern context.
The questions raised in opening chapter are answered in the final chapter with the conclusion that there is, after all, validity in undertaking research in comparative adult education and that it is an exciting and stimulating field of study.
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Chapter 1

*International comparative adult education: issues and contexts*

Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
and what we have been, makes us what we are.
[George Eliott, Middlemarch, Chapter 70]

Before I begin this study I must declare my own cultural bias and personal attributes. Both relate to the fact that I am a German national who has lived and worked as a professional translator, language teacher, teacher trainer and adult educator and university lecturer in Britain over many years. Privately and professionally I have been, and still am, in constant touch with Germany, the German language and German culture. I have researched into, written and talked about, aspects of adult education, adults learning languages and the role of culture in both countries. I consider myself to be bilingual and bicultural while conceding that such concepts are overstated and laden with ambiguities.

Biculturalism, however, has its own divisive and cohesive dynamism (see chapter 2). As a speaker of both German and English I have, on the one hand, relatively easy access to information and texts written in either language. Assumptions I make and conclusions I reach may, on the other hand, lack clear-sightedness contained within the sense of the 'other' an outsider can experience. After all, when visiting Germany, I am, in many ways, 'coming home'. I see myself to be more than just as a "traveller in various literal and metaphorical modalities" (Hake and Marriott 1992: 6). While I, as
a 'traveller' will have picked up "bits of baggage", collected more or less indiscriminately, in both countries, I am not entirely without "appreciation of its context from which it was wrenched". Yet it is an appreciation of complexities that rarely permits straightforward answers. The more I experience through the reading of texts or interaction with people, the more I seek to analyse, reflect, ask questions and try to understand, the more I am aware of the multifarious strands and layers that mesh into and out of what superficially amount to factual statements. Questions raised in my mind concern the nature of comparison and cross-cultural perception and cross-cultural communication. They relate to aspects of German or British history and society in general, adult education issues in either country, the nature of adult learning, the role of language and languages and intercultural adult education. These questions are not easily answered nor sorted into neat packages to be handled if and when required. The process of 'externalisation' may, therefore, be a difficult one, precisely because of my biculturalism and bilingualism since I cannot easily dissociate my own being from my experiences, personal reflections and understanding.

It follows that my approach to this study will be a phenomenological one. Phenomenology, according to Husserl, refers to the study of how to describe things and experience them through the senses.

The most basic philosophical assumption is that we can only know what we experience at attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness. Initially all our understanding comes from sensory experience of phenomena, but that experience must be described, explicated and interpreted. Yet descriptions of experience and interpretations are so intertwined that they often become one. Interpretation is essential to the understanding of
experience and experience includes interpretation. (Husserl cited by Patton 1990: 69)

Biographical details

I cannot, therefore, dissociate my own experiences from this type of research. I do not stand 'objectively' outside it and observe others; nor am I interested in the gathering of 'objective' facts. In other words, I find myself firmly in the interpretative rather than the positivist paradigm. Numerous professional and personal pathways have led me to this kind of approach: I started work as a professional translator from and into German and part-time adult educator teaching German to adults in adult education institutes and in industry and commerce before becoming Head of Languages in the School of Adult and Community Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Here I was responsible for a wide range of foreign language courses including English as a Foreign Language. I was able to develop a number of postgraduate training courses for language teachers and subsequently studied adult education at MA level and began to lecture on aspects of adult education at MA level myself.

Questions inviting reflective comparison arose on a daily basis. These related, amongst others, to the institutional gulf between higher and adult education, the differences in teaching foreign languages compared to English as a foreign language, the tension between theoretical and practical aspects of adult education, and between two countries, that is Germany and Britain. Like most adult educators I seemed to be functioning on 'split sites'.
My initial reasons for wanting to undertake this kind of research were directly linked to the difficulties I myself experienced when writing my MSc. dissertation entitled "Multicultural adult education in Britain and Germany: A comparison" - an often frustrating experience; and to other queries and difficulties related to the teaching of international and comparative studies in adult education as part of the university's MA programme. Here students were encouraged to investigate adult education systems in other countries with usually disappointing outcomes. For most there were simply too many unknowns, too many questions and too many issues to untangle. More specifically, questions arose around the nature and function of knowledge about other countries, other education systems, cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding as well as the role of motivation and why one should want to undertake a comparative study at all. Together with my students, I was constantly surprised to realise how little we know and understand about each other and about other countries. The little knowledge we do have is often wrapped up in preconceptions and misunderstandings. Pflug (1994:1-14) describes similar difficulties his students in India experienced with the study of international comparative education. After all, he asks, why should anything that happened, for example, in Swedish adult education be of particular interest to any of his students? Similarly, what should students, all professional adult educators, gain from knowing something about the German or Belgian system of adult education when neither of these countries are of particular relevance to them? The question of motivation does, of course, relate to all teaching and learning processes. I found motivation, however, to be a key factor in study of comparative adult education - simply because of its demands and complexities.
During the course of this study I became 'mainstreamed', that is I joined the Open University (OU) to develop the German undergraduate programme. Since then I have no longer been directly involved with the teaching of comparative adult education though I am, at the time of writing, external examiner at another university where students studying international and comparative adult education experience similar difficulties to those experienced by students in Goldsmiths College. The OU is well over 25 years old. The Centre for Modern Languages has an average of 6000 modern language students. Overall the University enrolls about 200 000 adult students per year, 27% of all part-time students at higher education institutions in the UK. The University claims to have become the country's largest educational provider with a worldwide reputation for its quality of teaching. Its modern language courses fall, for the time being, into the 'second generation' of distance education, that is, courses are based on a mixed media- approach, with interaction between students and tutors via tutorials and/or telephone support involving considerable resources in the development of high quality, professionally produced course materials with relatively low delivery costs to large numbers of students, though there are an increasing number of research projects into computer-mediated language learning. (According to Nipper in Mason and Kaye 1989 the term 'first' refers to single medium correspondence course and the 'third' to a convergence of telecommunication and computer technology.)

The nature of my work at the OU, however, continues to relate to theories and practices in adult education and foreign language learning. The teaching of another language, albeit at a distance, includes aspects which are often labelled as 'cultural studies'. Each teaching unit includes images and references to a foreign way of life,
which are taught both overtly or hidden as part of the curriculum. In practice this means that course teams have to ask themselves, in the early stages of syllabus design, about what one could reasonably expect of adult learners studying German to know about Germany: its geography, culture and history, or what themes, topics would be of interest to those students; furthermore, what do we as educators think they should know about Germany as part of the course and its curriculum; and, perhaps more importantly, what cultural inferences imbedded in the course material are there, and do students need to understand these in order to make sense of it.

The need for better cultural understanding is, of course, one of the philosophical cornerstones of the European Union. The 1992 Treaty on European Union makes the teaching of culture an important educational element across all member states. It stipulates that any action by the Community shall be aimed at the 'improvement of knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European people (CEC 1992: Article 128). Byram (1988: 5), in context of language teaching, refers to the need to firstly identify a body of knowledge, secondly to take account of this knowledge in the cognitive and affective learning process and thirdly to consider the methodological aspect of cultural teaching and intercultural communication. This approach should lend itself, it seems to me, to other subject areas, which teach elements of intercultural studies and aim to raise cultural awareness - though some may argue that one cannot 'teach' any of these.

Comparative questions of a very different kind began to occupy me. What is the relationship between comparative and intercultural adult education, between normative and operative values and between 'knowing about' and 'understanding'?
What, if anything, can the knowledge and understanding about inter- and cross-cultural communication gained in foreign language teaching offer comparative and/or international adult education?

The Anglo-German context

It is difficult to assess to what extent enhanced intercultural understanding and knowledge about other countries gained through networking, collaborative partnerships and information exchanges remain exclusive to university adult education circles or if they filter through to adult education levels in local communities and hence to adult learners. Despite the current explosion of information via the media and the Internet, stereotyping and prejudices against numerous social groupings, including Germany and the Germans, remain rife. Anti-German prejudice is nothing new. There is ample evidence dating back to the Roman historian Tacitus, and before him Caesar, who had extolled the virtues of the German enemy as ‘noble savages’ on the one hand, and as ‘clumsy’ on the other (Hahn 1995: 2). In British literature, too, and over the centuries, Germans often were, and continue to be, perceived in a negative light or at least as being different (Althaus and Mog 1992, Blaicher 1992). English writers during both World Wars aimed to demonstrate the moral superiority of the British over the Germans – understandably so. The Sun’s headline “The Sun meets the Hun’ with reference to a visit by the German Ambassador in the year of unification following the Ridley affair of July 1990 has been raised to levels of a ‘cause célèbre’ in Anglo-German relationships (Cullingford and Husemann 1995, Kielinger 1996).
Incidents such as these touch upon controversial debates in relation to national characteristics, stereotyping and perceptions in and across a number of academic disciplines (Peabody 1985). They also raise question about normative values and tasks for those in adult education, which, after all, aim to break down barriers, broaden the mind and combat ethnocentrism for the sake of society as a whole. The question of normative values in relation to comparative adult education seems to me an important one. It is also one which is rarely explored. Are comparative studies, however, not also powerful instruments that may shift parochial attitudes and change perceptions? Or are these, in the words of Brookfield (1985: 233), the pursuit of the "comparative educator's Holy Grail" of comprehensive and mutually exclusive schemata easy to ignore?

Some ventures, however, do succeed. Marriott (1995), writing about English-German relations in international adult education, refers to a particularly close relationship between German and British adult educators which can be traced back to the last century. Others, notably Künzel and Knoll (1981), Friedenthal-Haase and Zellhuber-Vogel (1993b), Elsdon (1994), and Knoll (1996c) have confirmed similar findings. Research topics chosen, however, usually depend on areas of interest by individual scholars, or on certain pre-occupations or fashions of the time. For example, the advent of the Single European Market led to a number of publications on Germany as a review of 25 years the journal *Comparative Education* from 1960 to 1985 confirms (1985: Vol. 25). The so-called 'dual system' is seen as exemplary to many educators not to mention politicians in Britain (Raggat 1988). This view is reiterated by Glowka (1989: 319) who concentrates his study on perceptions German educators generally have of the British system and vice versa. He refers to comparative research
undertaken by Schmidt (1981) who, with reference to the British education system, albeit quite some time ago, found that the Germans had regarded as exemplary the Open University, community education, the great variety of curriculum developments, teacher centres, the establishment of the concept of open education. Glowka, however, strikes a note of caution over such simplifications. "When educational policy makers in Great Britain refer to the situation in West Germany as a model, the motives are transparently clear: they are simply adding a further stanza to the old song of international comparison as a means of legitimating already established political goals. It has little to do with learning from other countries. At the same time both nations could - with their rich cultures - learn a lot from each other" (page 331).

Jarvis (in Mader 1993: 8), with reference to the lack of awareness of adult education perspectives in both Britain and Germany, states that English literature on the subject is read as infrequently by these scholars as is German literature by English speaking scholars of adult education. Yet there were similar concerns, similar questions and different ways of answering them. Knoll (1996c: 10) regrets the dominance of the Anglo-American world in international adult education - perhaps, as he suggests, due to the 'publish or perish' syndromes in these countries - and the lack of international recognition with regard to specifically German contributions to the field of adult education per se. Here he mentions paid education leave and the German legislative structure that seems exemplary to hard-pressed adult education services elsewhere. Siebert (1993: 145) raises similar concerns by stating that English and American colleagues rarely seek active participation in German theoretical discussions. Foreign publications, too, according to Siebert are less concerned with theory-practice-
problems but much more with research. German scholars are seemingly more inspired by American and French sociologists such as Mead and Bourdieu. "Foreign adult educators seem to concentrate on their own subject such as adults learning while German scholars see adult education as 'across the board' science, involved with God and the world around us" (Siebert 1993: 145). He continues to speculate about common international trends in adult education whereby the phenomenon of adults participating in adult education is moving from the occasional and incidental to more cohesive forms of formal and informal learning (page 147). Friedenthal-Haase (1993a: 255) refers to Anglo-German relationship "which is certainly not the only national constellation that promises to yield insight into the intercultural potential of German adult education - one needs only to cast a sidelong glance at the links with Scandinavia or the USA, or even at the rich traditional cultural bonds connecting Germany with countries of Central-Eastern Europe. What militates, however, in favour of singling out specially the case of Anglo-German relations is their continuity and reciprocal intensity as well as readily documented multi-level tie-ins with politics, economics and technology."

**Current issues**

Interpretation and the attaching of meaning require forms of comparative reflection, communication and interaction. One cannot understand something without relating that something to something else. We compare and reflect on a daily basis. It is part of human experience and learning. It is in essence a subjective process and not necessarily one that leads to new knowledge to be shared by others. It is perhaps not surprising that few scholars have undertaken comparative adult education research
based on juxtapositioning of similarities and differences according to the Bereday model (1964). Wörmann's (1985) examination of university adult education both in Britain and Germany presents an exception. Knoll (in Reischmann, Bron Jelenc 1999: 22) states that although a lot of work has been done in the development of a methodical repertoire since the early 1970s, the studies do not hide the fact that descriptive national studies are most likely to be regarded as comparative adult education research work, though, more accurately, they should be classified as international adult education research. This view could be proved and supported by country descriptions and materials of the ECLE-Project “Organisation and Structure of Adult Education in Europe” (ECLE 1978). Authors, such as Titmus (1981) or Jarvis (1992a) have produced works on country-by-country reports on adult education systems within several European countries. I myself have published such a report on adult education in the United Kingdom on behalf of the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (German Institute for Adult Education) (Arthur 1994). These reports were issued as a series because "countries of Europe are growing closer and closer together. In many areas of work people feel the need to learn more about living and working conditions in other European countries, to collect new ideas and explore the possibility of working together more closely" (Nuissl 1994: 5). Country reports of this kind tend to concentrate on descriptions of historical developments, policies and institutional structures though they are usually written within a comparative frame of mind. Numerous other international studies focus on specific case studies or themes in two or more countries (Savicevic on concepts of andragogy 1991, E.A.E.A. 1993 on organisations in the countries of the European Community; Davies on access, 1995; Frieling, Raape, and Sommer on multicultural adult education, 1997; Gallacher, Osborne and Postle on widening access to higher education in Scotland and Australia,
1996; Choi, Lee, Morris in Reischman, Bron and Jelenc 1998 amongst numerous others). These rarely involve comparative research methods. They do, however, invite the readers to compare and reflect on similar issues and practices in their own country. Other comparative studies, such as the Leeds Studies in Continuing Education, focus on historical investigations of cross-cultural perception, cultural borrowing with particular reference to Germany, Britain and the Netherlands. These came to fruition because researchers from three universities found that they shared common interests which they were able to pursue over a number of years (Friedenthal-Haase, Hake, Marriott 1991).

Nowadays, the International Society for Comparative Studies in Adult Education (ISCEA), founded in the early 1970s, has about 80 members in 30 countries (Reischmann 1997: 237). Yet the study of comparative adult education is no longer fashionable in adult education circles; it is an area of study that surfaces from time to time but it is not one which has led to new insights and understanding within the context of theoretical adult education. Furthermore, while some scholars, Jarvis, Künzel, Knoll, Titmus amongst others, have written about comparative adult education as a form of scholarly enquiry, few of those have undertaken comparative research studies themselves. However, Kulich (1996) in his World Bibliography on International Comparative Adult Education 1945-1995 lists well over 1500 publications with a noticeable increase in publications in the 1980s and 1990s over the previous years. Yet, as Titmus (1989: 543) states, "it is easy to derive an exaggerated impression of comparative adult education's achievement. It is still largely at a stage of descriptive surveys, often incomplete and impressionistic, if not anecdotal. Analysis and explanation of phenomena are frequently weak. Comparison,
in the sense of identifying differences between phenomena, is rare." Titmus’ critical stance raises the question of what is meant by 'comparative' in the conceptual sense and why there are so few examples of explanatory comparisons. As he sees it, the problems do not lie so much in the techniques of enquiry as in the state of adult education itself. To compare phenomena in adult education is particularly difficult because of the breadth and diversity of what is regarded as 'adult education' and of the variations of meaning given to it from country to country, if indeed a concept of it as a distinctive process or system exists at all (Titmus 1989: 543).

Perhaps the decline of interest in comparative adult education can be linked to scholars in adult education having become too sensitised to the complexities and changing nature of adult education; perhaps research studies along the Bereday model involving positivist juxtaposition of similarities and differences are no more than a heuristic tool (Künzel 1994:1). Perhaps the future of adult education itself faces too many uncertainties to allow new theories to emerge. Jarvis (1996a: 237) raises further points by referring to aspects modernity and post-modernity. Knowledge, he argues, was once regarded as empirically true and, therefore, valid. "But now the basis of knowledge is changing. It is increasingly becoming apparent that many statements about society are ideological rather than empirical."

Yet there are many organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO, CEDEFOP and the WORLD BANK which initiate comparisons based on national contexts. Such studies can be linked to national needs and the dominance of market forces, to increased mobility and changing needs in vocational education and training, to technological advances and to global, environmental issues. One could argue, therefore, that the
need for more precise, reliable comparison has become part of political and economic reality and that is, at global level, a driving force behind the demand for more cross-national comparisons, most of which apply to specific problems and are fairly limited in scope (Øyen 1990:2).

The media, including the Internet, offer rich resources and access to information. The various EU-sponsored programmes such as those within the SOCRATES frameworks have no doubt stimulated a growth in international interactions and professional exchanges - and there are, of course, an ever-increasing number of international conferences to attend. I myself have taken part in some of these. Professional partnerships with continental counterparts seem, on the surface at least, attractive and worthwhile. They also require a minimum of pragmatic knowledge about the countries involved. Furthermore, the European Society for Research in the Education of Adults (ESREA), by subscribing to a scholarly approach, fosters professional networking as means to enhance intercultural relationships. Since its foundation in 1991 the society with about 350 members has promulgated European research networks which address adult education topics such as access into higher education, biographical research, migration, ethnicity and racism, adult unemployment amongst others - all of which invite by implication comparison and reflection on the basis of intercultural communication (Flake 1997a: 287).

The global context

The question about the validity of comparative studies in both education and adult education in the context of increasing Europeanisation and globalisation is rarely
explored. Increasingly cultural differences and delineation between societies become blurred. Tastes in fashion, art and music are no longer determined on the basis of national norms and identification but by worldwide commercial competition and rapid advances in global media and communication systems. Milling around the shopping centre in Cologne, as I frequently do, it is difficult to find evidence of what could be described as typically German, though I accept my own subjectivity when making such a claim. However, the same chain stores selling the same items are to be found in Cologne, Leipzig, Leeds or Amsterdam. As Harvey (1989: 225) states, of the many developments in the area of consumption, the mobilisation of fashion in mass markets provides a means to accelerate the pace of consumption, not only in clothing but across lifestyles and recreational activities such as leisure, sport, pop music, videos and children’s games. The volatility and the ephemerality of fashions, products, processes and ideas, coupled with the virtues and values of instaneity and disposability are, according to Harvey, manifestations of the compression of time and space in the postmodern condition. Beck (1992: 130-131) in this context, refers to aspects of consumerism which point to manifestations of increasingly global standardisation, thereby affecting the market, money, law, mobility, education and so on. Yet, and here lies the paradox, much of the consumerism is also concerned with accommodating individual tastes via niche markets and, and the same time, conformity - precisely because individual non-conformity is dependent on mass-market systems. It is not difficult to see how these arguments can be transferred into the areas of education, particularly adult continuing education with its desire to attend to the individual and yet conform to increasing standardisation in terms of learning outcomes and quality assurance processes.
Globalisation is widely understood to be a market-driven concept which engulfs almost all aspects of our daily lives. It is at best a crude metaphor to describe heuristically phenomena in the international economy which would seem to amount to qualitative distinct and new contexts for economic activity towards the end of the twentieth century. “There is a broad consensus about the definition of the process: namely, the majority of the world’s population is living within an economy where the so-called factor markets, markets for goods, services, labour and capital, are increasingly subject to international competition“(Leaman 1997: 1). Conceptually, the words global and international represent different schools of thought and historical developments. While international is linked to the word national and notions of the national states interconnecting with each other, global assumes a submergence of the state into the global dimensions and a polarisation between the global and the local which is expressed in the slogan ‘think global – act local’ and vice versa.

In academia the term globalisation has led to a plethora of literature (Harvey 1989, Giddens 1990, Featherstone 1990, Beck 1992, 1997, Robertson 1992, Green 1997, Walters 1997 among others). It is an amorphous term which is interwoven with concepts such as late or postmodernity, reflexive modernity or post-structuralism, all of which point to new forms of social structures in relation to industrialised or agrarian societies of previous ages; social structures which are connected with notions of space, time, boundedness and specificites together with processes of increasing individualisation, uncertainties and the breakdown of traditional values. Beck (1997: 26-30) distinguishes between Globalismus (globalism), Globalität (globality) and Globalisierung (globalisation). He relates the term globalism to linearity, neoliberalism and the absolute dominance of global market economies which
subsume all other global developments, including political dimensions, while the term
globality embraces notions of a global society without frontiers though not, he argues,
without national consciousness. Globality is irreversible. Globalität meint: Wir leben
längst in einer Weltgesellschaft, und zwar in dem Sinne, daß die Vorstellung
geschlossener Räume fiktiv wird. (Globality means: We have lived for some time in a
world society, in the sense that the notion of closed spaces becomes fictitious) (Beck
1997: 27). He refers to a wahrgenommene, reflexive Weltgesellschaft (a perceived,
reflexive world society), a global society which embraces differences and variety
without unity, exemplified amongst others by global news reporting, transnational
forms of production, competing world markets, transnational consumer boycotts and
the destruction of the environment. The term globalisation refers, according to Beck,
to processes in relation to expansion within space, stability within time, and social
density within networks and relationships. Globalisation, in the words Günter Grass,
receives little opposition:

Cup your hand behind your ear and you can hear the victorious
ideology of capitalism hoarsely shouting its absolute demands for
globalisation into space. It belongs to an echo. It lacks the enemy,
the noisy opposition (Grass 1997: 15).

Robertson (1992: 9) refers to both the compression of the world and the
intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. The processes and
action are not new; they have been ongoing with some interruptions for many
centuries, though the main focus of the discussion is relatively recent. We need
to learn, according to Harvey (1989: 227), how to cope with an overwhelming
sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds and command of
money, space, forms and time which form a substantial nexus of social power we cannot afford to ignore (his italics). "The volatility, of course makes it extremely difficult to engage in long term planning. Indeed, learning to play the volatility right now is just as important as accelerating the turnover time. This means being both highly adaptable and fast moving in response to market shifts, or masterminding the volatility" (page 286). With reference to global mass communication systems, Harvey finds the implosion of space no less traumatic. Paradoxically, he argues, - and these are all important issues in the debate about comparisons -, the compression of time and space forces us to look for deeper meanings and to pay attention to localities and specificities. Robertson (in Featherstone et.al.1995: 25) picks up similar themes with his reference to 'glocalisation' – by which he means the telescoping of the words global and local. The promotion of what is declared to be local is in fact done from above or outside and cannot simply be seen as a triumph of homogenising forces. Globalisation, according to Giddens (1990: 20) is best understood as a general way of expressing fundamental aspects of time-space distanciation. It concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations at a distance with local contextualities.

**Impacts and developments**

These discussions, it seems to me, offer a fabric on which to pin our sense of being overwhelmed by the impact of the economic integration currently taking place. The trend towards formalisation of regional arrangements to facilitate regional economic integration is noteworthy. The European Union is an example, but there are parallel
ones such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) embracing Canada, the United States, and Mexico or the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC) which includes the Antipodes, Japan, ASEAN (Japan and other members of the Asian group), the US and Canada. Hannerz (in King 1991: 108) talks of cultural imperialism with the coming Western cultural flow at its centre and local culture distinctly at the periphery. He calls this a ‘peripheral corruption scenario’. It is deeply ethnocentric. Grieving for the vanishing Other, he argues, is in some way easier than confronting it live and kicking. But then we are in the midst of an unstoppable technological revolution. Luke (in Featherstone, Lash and Robertson 1995: 91) argues that the workings of power, politics and ideology in these transnational flows of capital, people and commodities, information and culture are creating a cyberspace/telesphere that is coextensive with but different from the first nature in the natural biosphere and second nature to the industrial technosphere.

Accordingly, this third new culture of cyberspatial/televisual/informational glocality fuses the local and the global in a new everyday life-world and it is the hyperreal estate of these glocal territories which now anchors many social struggles, political organisations, economic competitions and cultural créolisations in most regions of the existing capitalist world systems.

Coleman and Underhill (1998: 5-6) point out that in economic terms the production of goods has become integrated on a world scale. Increasingly, transnational corporations build plants almost anywhere in the world on grounds of overall efficiency and favourable production costs. Associated with these processes is a move away from hierarchical internal structures to flexible production organised through subcontracting and other network relationships. Information technology facilitates the
creation and maintenance of such networks on a global scale. Furthermore, the present era has seen an unprecedented expansion of financial transactions on a global scale. Whereas in the past financial transactions tended to follow and support expanding goods trade, in the present movement of capital and financial products on the global plane outstrips by far goods trading. This financial globalisation includes rapid growth of international banking, securities and equities markets, growing interdependence and linking between domestic financial services markets and the deepening and diversification of domestic markets. Each of these developments is again greatly facilitated by the availability of communications technology which enables information to be transferred almost instantly from one market or country to another.

In economic terms globalisation and the application of linguistic and cultural competence impact on international trade, which in volume has been growing steadily. As Hagen states (1998: 14) between 1950 and 1994 world trade has multiplied 14 times (not manufacturing output). Global competence is now much more about building and managing a multinational infrastructure than cross-border selling or competition, which means the internationalisation of many functions and human competences in a company, ranging from research and development, procurement, production, logistics and marketing to Human Resources Development and financial management. At the heart of this competence lies the ability to communicate and empathise with different cultures, which cannot be achieved without forms of mutual deep-level knowledge and understanding.
Watson (1994: 87) refers to Western paradigms and products in education which continue to shape and influence the thinking in many developing countries. There is little doubt, he maintains, that where the dissemination of information and knowledge, especially technical, comes through textbooks produced and controlled by Western companies, there is a form of knowledge dependency. Watson cites India as a good example. While barely 2 per cent of the population is literate in English, over 50 per cent of all books and over 80 per cent of all scientific and technical journals are produced in English, thereby sustaining the thinking and cultural patterns of the ruling élite.

The ever expanding global communication and media systems coupled with the international and intra-national transfer of cultural knowledge, goods and people inevitably lead to forms of both explicit and implicit comparison, be it by agents involved in commercial or public sector transactions, or by people who no longer perceive themselves to be part of only one society. Conversely, and almost surreptitiously, many of these factors point to an uneasiness, which in the Delors Report (1996: 47) *Learning: The Treasure Within* is referred to as "engendered by the indecipherable nature of the future combined with the ever sharper awareness of the huge disparities existing in the world and the tensions between the local and the global imbalance between rich and poor and reckless use of natural resources. As the Delors Report points out, at its most fundamental level, an increasingly market-driven global environment cannot be separated from the world's ever increasing population, - from 5.57 billion in 1993 to 6.25 billion the year 2000 and an expected 10 billion by 2050 -, with the majority in poorer countries whose likely fate seems uncertain. By the year 2020 the food gap in wheat, rice, corn and other cereals, the
staple diet in the developing world, is expected to grow from its 1998 level of 94 million tons to 228 million tons and 25 per cent of the world's children are expected to be malnourished and underweight (World Bank Press Release, October 12, 1998).

By contrast, the 'vanishing Europe' has been widely discussed in the media and elsewhere. In statistical terms, Sweden, for example, heads the table as the 'oldest' country in the EU where only 15 per cent of the population is between 16 and 24 while 21 per cent is over 65 years old (Euromagazin 1998). An ageing population is likely create demands on health and welfare support systems, since it is anticipated that majority of dependants will be living alone and the consequences for public expenditure will be serious. Two main factors explaining this demographic revolution are declining fertility and mortality rates: fewer children and more old people. While on average around 2.1 children per woman of childbearing age are required to replace the population, the EU average is 1.59.

These figures, though perhaps meaningless in themselves, nevertheless point to considerable changes in terms of welfare, education and training, adult education, mobility and transfer of capital across numerous countries. Mass tourism, too, has created an entirely new dimension in social and cultural interaction. In the original twelve countries of the European Community private travel and tourism is estimated to grow by 78 per cent from 1995 to 2005 (OECD 1996a: 30). The number of holidays taken by those over 55 years alone increased by 35 per cent between 1990 and 1995. In addition, many of the 'young elderly', cushioned by generous early retirement and pension deals, have migrated from Northern to Southern countries of Europe to settle there either permanently or to live there in the winter months. As
many as 27 per cent of European nationals living in Spain come from the UK and 16 per cent from Germany respectively (Williams, King, Warnes 1997:120).
Furthermore, in the developed countries globalisation involves harmonising changes in consumer attitudes, communication patterns new technologies and information systems. Anything and everything seems possible. Surely the most remarkable feature of the modern cultural landscape is the overwhelming dominance of the mass media with their massive potential for homogenising national - and global - cultures (Green 1997: 26). In addition, information can now be communicated electronically in the form of spoken and written language and pictorial and computer-generated images, and the technology associated with the transmission of the multiple media is familiar and accepted. The development of the Internet, as a homogenising research, communications, entertainment and commercial medium, has doubled in the number of users and networks as well as in volume of traffic each year since 1988. The OECD report *Lifelong Learning for All* finds the massive diffusion of information technology not easy to capture in statistical terms. However, the report confirms, the software market grew by 17.5 per cent over the 1991-93 in OECD countries and the telecommunications traffic grew by more than 10 per cent during the period 1988-1992 (OECD1996a: 31). By the year 2010 eighty per cent of UK households are expected to be connected to the Internet (Independent, 20th December 1999).
Statistics on worldwide or domestic computer and Internet users are almost impossible to pin down. They multiply on an almost daily basis. The global information society is not a phenomenon waiting to happen. It is already under way and gathering speed before our very eyes.
Bélanger (1994: 359) expresses concerns when he points out that a vicious circle is created: those who participate more in learning activities during different periods of their adult life tend to be those who fared better with initial education. Though in the developed countries most benefit from prolonged initial education, and the overall literacy rate in developing countries is also showing an upward trend, the salient gap remains in initial education, both in the developed and developing countries. This crisis remains aggravated by widening economic disparities between both. Bélanger points to further dialectics by stating that the rapid expansion of social demand for organised adult learning is probably one of the more significant trends in education over the last 20 years and in many countries adult education has become one of the poles of growth. Changing working and employment patterns as well as the introduction of new technologies combined with industrial restructuring and the transformation of production processes has given an impetus for renewal of qualifications among the active working population and increase in demand for further education though those in part-time work or casual employment seem to remain marginalised (Bélanger 1994: 362).

The Delors Report, having considered many of these issues, sums up these concerns by making the following recommendations -

- Worldwide interdependence and globalisation are major forces in contemporary life. They are already at work and will leave a deep imprint on the twenty-first century. They must require that overall consideration, extending well beyond the
fields of education and culture, be given as of now, to the roles and structures of international organisations.

- The major danger is that of a gulf between a minority of people who are capable of finding their way successfully about those new worlds that are coming into being and the majority who feels that they are at the mercy of events and have no say in the future of society, with dangers that entail a setback to democracy and widespread revolt.

- We must be guided by the Utopian aim of steering the world towards greater mutual understanding, a greater sense of responsibility and greater solidarity, through acceptance of our spiritual and cultural differences. Education, by providing access to knowledge for all, has precisely this universal task of helping people to understand the world and to understand others (page 51).

All these points raise a number of issues relevant to international comparisons and intercultural understanding. Robertson (1992: 29) refers to a ‘relativization’ between individuals and national societies. The term is meant to indicate ways in which, as globalisation proceeds, challenges are increasingly presented to the stability of particular perspectives on, and collective and individual participation in, the overall globalisation process. He refers to world of complexities and differentiation with problematic implications for societies in the spheres of globality which will increase over time. Neither Germany nor Britain can escape these challenges.
Questions that emerge

In the course of time I have been struck again and again, how on the one hand comparative adult education as a scholarly activity has been dismissed by many and yet how comparative activities are undertaken across many countries and communities, not just in adult education but in education and many other disciplines. I have also noted that despite increased mobility and mass communication systems just how few adult education theorists are able to cross the divide between Anglo-American and the European world and how little adult educators from different countries know about each others’ histories, geographies, let alone adult education systems and areas of concern. Yet it seems to be increasingly important to develop understanding about each other and each other’s countries or communities if we are not to succumb to superficial fragmentation of knowledge and information. Having attended numerous international conferences, I am aware of how many discussions on professional issues have been stifled by elementary questions about, for example, differences in school systems. Increased mobility, instant communication and the global information explosion via world-wide computer networks have not, it seems, led to better understanding about adult education systems in other countries, let alone in either Germany or Britain. On the contrary, information wrongly perceived can prevent deep level understanding, cause confusion, and, at worst, create barriers rather than remove them. Issues such as time-space compression, the global and local, heterogeneity and homogeneity impact on adult learning and hence the education of adults. They call for a fundamental reassessment of what was and continues to be understood as comparative adult education.
Questions that come to my mind and which will underpin this study relate above all to the validity of undertaking a comparative study in adult education and intercultural understanding. It is clear that since its early days of the late 1960s comparative adult education research has rarely developed new insights and areas of knowledge. In fact, there has never been a theoretical framework in relation to comparisons or, indeed, the role of interculturalism in adult education. The preoccupation with the collection of empirical data and with the clarification of concepts has, it seems to me, stifled the debate. Comparative studies in areas such as vocational education and training, transferable skills and qualifications are increasingly initiated by governments and supra-national bodies for functional purposes. Yet we, as individuals, are exposed to a multitude of information instantly accessible across the globe which we rarely know how to interpret and understand. But to what extent can a renewed look at comparative adult education provide us with answers? Jarvis (1996a: 240), arguing within the context post-modernity and increasing globalisation, proposes five main theoretical dimensions within which comparative analysis might be conducted in the future: the nature of the clientele, the nature of qualifications, the nature of providers, the nature of provision and methods of presentation. Knoll (1996a: 229), on the other hand, sees a strong link between the 'problem approach' and country-by-country monographic comparison, which would include empirical elements. He sees areas of future research to be contained within multiculturalism and international adult education, programmes against illiteracy, the balancing of vocational and general adult education, the care for target groups, the Europeanization of adult education, and strategies of international and comparative research. Künzel (1994:12), in the context of European continuing education, pleads for a more culturally sensitive approach, one that should not confine itself to historical debates around cultural
borrowing and transfer, nor one which was dictated to by the administrative and economic forces contained within the European Union. Anglo-German intercultural research carried out by the Leeds Studies in Continuing Education, is explained by Marriott (1995:viii) as “not primarily concerned with the study of English affairs on the one hand and German on the other, but as something in between: the nature and consequence of contacts between enthusiasts for adult education from the two sides.” I am not sure if the word 'enthusiast' will suffice if adult education aspires to the realms of professionalism; nor am I sure if one can research adult education between two or more countries without trying to understand the causes and meaning of phenomena and interpret these on the basis of informed knowledge and deep-level understanding, or if one has to be bicultural and bilingual in the context of the countries concerned in order to do so. Texts written about comparative adult education seem, with hindsight, limited in their approach. Yet do they not also offer much that is worthwhile to be pursued?

The questions, then, which emerge can perhaps be summed up in the following way:

- Is there validity in undertaking international comparative studies in adult education at a time when, with expanding globalisation and mass communication systems, societies, organisations and individuals face increasing uncertainties and adult education itself remains a precarious and ill-defined field of study?

- If there is such validity, what methods approaches are appropriate and of relevance to adult educators nowadays?
• How can I make comparative adult education meaningful to myself in the first instance but also meaningful to others?

These questions are embedded within the context of adult education in Britain and Germany and will form the basis of this particular research. But, in the words of Foucault (1972: 21) “there is negative work to be carried out first: we must rid ourselves of a whole mass of notions, each of which, in its own way, diversifies the theme of continuity.” This thesis, therefore, is for me a voyage of exploration into unknown and uncertain territories to which elements of danger and pitfalls are attached but which, nevertheless, offer a sense of adventure, challenge and excitement. It is in this spirit that I approach this study.
Chapter 2

Research method: a phenomenological approach

In the previous chapter I outlined some of the issues in comparative adult education which initially seemed to offer little encouragement or inspiration. I also touched upon issues of globalisation and rapid advances in information technology which reinforced my sense of uncertainties on the one hand, but also one of challenge on the other. To me it seemed difficult to maintain that comparative studies have nothing meaningful to offer to the community of adult educators. On the contrary: any exchange with another country stimulates reflective comparison between what is known and what is unknown or familiar and not familiar. The numerous international activities in adult continuing education should, one might assume, invite comparative studies on a wide range of topics and between several countries. As Sztompka (in Albrow and King 1990: 53) points out, on the face of it, the future for comparative studies seems better than ever. Künzel (1994) with his plea for a culturally sensitive approach in the context of Europe and comparative adult education, without developing his argument further, seems to me to point into the right direction.

My professional world embraces the study of adult education, foreign languages and interculturalism in relation to Germany and Britain. The nature of foreign language learning itself is tightly interwoven with intercultural dimensions. In the words of Stern (1983: 206) learners should be made aware of the interaction between culture and language (Language IN culture, culture IN language) (his capitals and brackets).
Language cannot function without social context and meaning. Foreign language learning cannot be undertaken without reference to the country's culture and society. Language teachers and learners constantly draw on their own knowledge and experiences and tutors generally encourage the making of comparisons between the own and the other country. Comparative analysis and reflection in co-operation with others, therefore, can web cohesion into an acceptable level of understanding and help eliminate prejudice and cross-cultural misunderstanding. Conceptually the terms multi-, cross- or intercultural education have served as umbrella terms for a variety of theories, policies and practices. Friedenthal-Haase (1991: 37) refers to the distinction made in English between intercultural and cross-cultural. While the former refers to the relationship between different cultures, thereby stressing the first part of the word intercultural, the latter emphasises the viewing of cultures as opposites. The term 'interkulturell' has been widely used in the German adult education context particularly in relation to work with migrants, or even with East German adult educators following unification in 1990. By contrast, in Britain practical and scholarly aspects of intercultural communication, the role of language with some kind of intercultural dimension are seldom an integral part of teacher training or general staff development nor are they referred to in adult education literature. Here the term 'multicultural' has, since the early 1980s, concentrated on anti-discriminatory practices and racial awareness training in the spirit of power relationships and equal opportunities in and outside the curriculum. In that sense multi - rather than intercultural adult education has been the focus of much practical and theoretical work undertaken over recent years. Gundra (1993: 19) goes further when he says that in Britain intercultural education has received a massive setback, partly because of the way in which the political right has trampled on these issues, but also because they
were aided and abetted by the rhetoric of anti-racists and multiculturalists who asserted political purity, without shifting educational achievements.

My initial sense of uncertainty and doubt was not eased through reading adult education literature either. Bright (1989: 5) refers to the epistemological conflict, in practical and professional terms, between adult education and its source disciplines and the need for adult educators to be aware of the knowledge base they are using. However, he continues, the first legitimate way to approach this awareness is the recognition that its epistemology is eclectic and contains many views and definitions of knowledge and their consequent definitions of education and adult education. With reference to German adult education theory and practice Siebert confirms a similar point of view. He states that adult education per se lacks epistemological identity and is, unlike other disciplines, therefore dependent on societal legitimisation (Siebert 1993: 14). "In der Tat: wer bis heute beansprucht, eine stringente Theorie der Erwachsenenbildung vorzulegen, demonstriert damit ein beneidenswertes Selbstbewusstsein oder eine erstaunliche Naivität" (page 17). (Indeed, whoever until now claims to have a stringent theory of adult education demonstrates enviable self-confidence or remarkable naively). The question that arises concerns the legitimacy of studies in the education of adults in relation to two or more countries if these are not based on scholarly foundations in the first instance. If there is no epistemology of adult education how can there be one for comparative adult education? As practitioners we often feel, in the words of Usher (1993: 17) 'uneasy'. We experience difficulties seeing its usefulness because it invariably appears remotely theoretical. There are, however, issues to be tackled. Usher suggests that we make the best of a situation we cannot hope to change and begin to develop a body of knowledge
relevant to adult education as a field of study. This implies a critical posture towards disciplinary knowledge. We need to question, he proposes, epistemological foundationalism, the naturalistic claims of the technical rational model and its instrumental consequences. “By adopting a critical posture, we can provide ourselves with the conceptual resources to develop our own discourse, a discourse which would ensure that disciplines have a place but it is not one of mastery. It is only through such a discourse that adult education can build its own research agenda” (Usher 1993: 23). Encouraging words to which I can respond. After all, adults learn and educators teach in many different situations and cultural environments. One might argue that manifestations of adult education are worldwide phenomena and hence worthy of reflective comparison and collective action.

These issues began to occupy me a great deal, particularly in the context of Anglo-German adult education and led my initial thinking around this research. Phillips and Pugh (1992: 18) state that “first, at the most basic level it means that you have something to say that your peers want to listen to”. The emphasis here is on having something to say, something that in my case, merited further investigation. The question which arose in my mind related to motivation and the purposes of comparative adult education. Why should any want to undertake comparative research? This somewhat naïve question was not, and is not even nowadays, easy to answer. Is being bicultural and bilingual a sufficient reason to undertake comparative research?

On being bicultural
Individual perceptions of cultural differences arise out of notions of being an outsider, belonging to another group and of trying to understand other thought processes, attitudes and actions. In everyday life, we perceive people from other countries as being different, we still refer to 'foreigners' or 'going abroad' not only in a negative but also in an enriching sense. Yet such concepts are elusive. They constantly change, adapt, and mutate to given spatial and temporal circumstances. I myself, for example, occasionally feel more German than British, but not always. Different circumstances provoke different reflections, attitudes and moods in an unmeasurable and indefinable manner. The experience of being a 'stranger' or 'foreigner' is for many a route to self-discovery. Previously held sets of belief and behaviour accepted as the norm in the home country may be challenged by other people's points of views and conventions. It is not surprising that not all that long ago many youngsters were sent abroad for a period of time in the belief that they would discover their own identity and thus mature into adulthood (Althaus, Mog 1992: 21). Thousands of young people nowadays tour the world, presumably with similar sentiments in mind, even if less explicitly stated. I myself on arrival in Britain was deeply challenged by friends and the media about the excesses of the Nazi period, more so perhaps than if I had stayed in Germany. Nowadays, however, I am no longer a stranger in this country according to the concepts first invoked by Simmel in 1908. His concept of a stranger, though perhaps outdated, nevertheless encapsulates the paradox of space and the sense of attached Zwiesgespaltenheit (mixed feelings or contradiction). Simmel wrote,
Bedingung, andererseits das Symbol der Verhältnisse zu Menschen ist. Es ist also hier der Fremde nicht in dem bisher vielfach berührtem Sinn gemeint, als der Wandernde, der heute kommt und morgen geht, sondern als der, der heute kommt und morgen bleibt – sozusagen der potenzielle Wandernde, der, obgleich nicht weitergezogen ist, die Gelöstheit des Kommens und Gehens nicht ganz überwunden hat (Simmel 1958:509).

(If wandering is the liberation from every given point in space, and thus the conceptual opposite to fixation at such a point, the sociological form of the ‘stranger’ presents the unity, as it were, of these two characteristics. This phenomenon too, however, reveals on the one hand, and the symbol, on the other, of human relations. The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going.”) (translation by Wolff, K.H. 1950: 402).

Mead (1967: 173) in his discussion of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’ asks, “where in conduct does the ‘I’ come in as over against the ‘me’?” He determines that the ‘I’ relates to the position in society and the feeling of having a certain function and privilege which are all defined in relation to ‘I’, but ‘I’ is not and cannot become a ‘me’. “We may have a better self and a worse self, but that again is not the ‘I’ as against over the ‘me’, because they are both selves” (ibid). The ‘me’, he argues, is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes (page 175).

The ‘I’, then, is this relation of the ‘I’ and the ‘me’, is something that is, so to speak, responding to a social situation which is within the experience of the individual. It is the answer which the individual makes to the attitude which others take towards him when he assumes an attitude towards them. Now, the attitudes he is taking toward them are present in his own experience, but his response to them will contain a novel element. The ‘I’ gives a sense of freedom, of initiative. The situation is there for us to act in a self-conscious fashion. We are aware of ourselves and of what the situation is, but exactly how we will act never gets into experience until after the action takes place (Mead 1967: 177).
Mead talks of responses containing novel elements and of a sense of freedom and initiative, sentiments which seem equally appropriate if transferred to a cross-cultural context. The ‘I’, I might want to argue, refers to the situation of the ‘outsider, the ‘foreigner, while the ‘me’ to the inner self irrespective of its outer circumstances.

Gudykunst (in Verma, Bagley 1984: 45-47), from the perspective of intercultural communication, refers to an abundance of research and theorising based upon the concepts of the ‘guest’, ‘newly arrived’, ‘newcomer’ ‘sojourner’, Simmel’s ‘stranger’, ‘immigrants’, ‘intruder’, ‘middle-man minority’ and ‘marginal man’ -- none of which, I hasten add, fit my own situation. Gudykunst, however, concedes the limitation of such typologies and argues that a more complete elaboration needed to be undertaken.

A fully articulated typology will integrate previous research on each of individual stranger statuses, specify individual characteristics which impact on strangers, elaborate on the factors which influence the type of status a stranger assumes and the factors influencing changes in stranger status, and, finally, specify how the typology can be integrated with the study of other forms of social relations. Any typology, however, would need to take increasing mobility in a globalising, post-modern world into account. Acton and Walker de Felix (in Valdes 1986: 21-22), from the perspective of second language teaching, have conceptualised the model of acculturation in four stages. 1. Tourist: the early phase, in which the new culture is almost totally inaccessible; the phase often referred to as entailing some degree of culture shock. 2. Survivor: the stage of functional language and functional understanding of the culture. 3. Immigrant: the degree of acculturation one would expect of an educated person, one who is literate in his or her own language.
4. Citizen: the stage that is almost of the native speaker, in which one has acculturated to the degree that one is only rarely tripped up by the subtleties of the language and culture. Presumably, I myself, having spent most of my adult life in this country, will have reached the stage of Citizen by now – though to what extent I have remained ‘German’ in my ways of thinking and understanding the world around me and to what extent I have been moulded by influences of my adopted home country is impossible to say.

It follows that the terms bicultural and bilingual are bound to be critically received. Bloomfield offers the following explanation:

In cases where perfect language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages. After early childhood few people have enough muscular and nervous freedom or enough opportunity and leisure to reach perfection in a foreign language; yet bilingualisms of this kind is commoner than one might suppose, both in cases of our immigrants and as a result of foreign travel, foreign study, or similar association. Of course one cannot define the degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes bilingual: the distinction is relative (Bloomfield 1935: 55).

It is, however, difficult to claim that there has not been a loss in my native language or, indeed, or that I have native-like control of the other. For practical purposes the following definition, widely accepted in professional circles, suits my circumstances more readily:

Bilingualism must be able to account for at least two languages within one and the same speaker, remembering that the ability in these two languages may or may not be equal, and that the ways two languages are used plays a significant role (Baetens Beardmore 1982: 3).
In general, language issues are rarely a problem to me. However, there were practical issues to consider in relation to this research: personal circumstances prevented a prolonged study visit to Germany. Research methods such as qualitative interviews within the framework of comparison in both Germany and Britain were not a realistic undertaking. Furthermore, my experiences in language teaching as well as those I gained when writing my MSc. dissertation have taught me that a positivist approach based on contrastive analysis of similarities and differences along the Bereday (1964) model of juxtapositioning was likely to fraught with difficulties (see chapter 3). I was aware that the collection of statistics, particularly in adult continuing education, was an almost impossible task – one of the accepted reasons for the failure of comparative adult education. I was also aware that I, as an individual researcher, could not remain outside this study. I am too closely involved with both cultures to consider an objective approach in the positivist paradigm. The interpretive paradigm, therefore, seems a natural home to me.

Having attempted to formulate my initial research questions, the matter of an appropriate research method began to preoccupy me. It is a complex one and its relevance is not always immediately apparent. When writing in German a country report *Erwachsenenbildung im Vereinigten Königreich* on behalf of the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) about adult education in the United Kingdom, I was fully aware that I was writing from a bicultural comparative perspective (Arthur 1994). I chose to concentrate on issues such as ‘access’ and ‘liberal studies in higher education’, topics I knew from experience German adult educators would find different from provisions in their own country. In the course of writing I used a
variety of texts and official data taken from British sources, which I was able to
deconstruct on the basis of my knowledge of adult education in this country and then
to reconstruct so that a German reader would be able to attach meaning to the given
information. I suspect that I was able to do so because I had deeper knowledge and
insight of the German system and a greater awareness of similarities and differences
between either country than a monolingual or monocultural author would have had.
At the time I was not aware of any particular research method or theory I had
employed to write the report. I was aiming to write ‘subjectively objective’ by
drawing on official data and documents and interpreting these on behalf of the reader
in light of my own knowledge and experience of either country. As Titmus states,

All forms of comparative work involve comparison by somebody.
Single nation studies are directed almost entirely at foreign
audiences. To make sense of these studies, readers will inevitably
compare them with their knowledge of their own national
provisions……Again, in a descriptive analytical study, unless
phenomena known to the reader (which will usually mean, from
their own society) form part of it, then the reader must be expected,
consciously or not, to make comparison with his own country. The
unknown is only to be understood with reference to the known.
(Titmus in Reischmann, Bron, Jelenc 1999: 37)

While being aware of national differences at the time of writing, I was not aware that
I was writing from within the interpretative research paradigm. Patton (1990: 89)
confirms my approach by referring to the world of practice and pragmatics. Not all
questions are theory based, Patton argues. Indeed, the quite concrete and practical
questions of people working to make the world a better place, and wondering if what
they are doing is working, can be addressed without placing the study into a
theoretical framework.
In short, in real-world practice, methods can be separated from the epistemology out of which they have emerged. One can use statistics in a straightforward ways without doing a literature review of logical positivism. One can make an interpretation without studying hermeneutics. And one can conduct open-ended interviews or make observations without reading treatises on phenomenology. The methods of qualitative inquiry now stand on their own as reasonable ways to find out what is happening in programs and other human settings (Patton 1990: 90).

In practice therefore he may be right, but only partially. Many researchers, indeed, describe their projects and findings on the basis of qualitative or quantitative approaches or a combination of the two without necessarily referring to the theoretical perspectives which underpin chosen research methods. Much depends on the level of sophistication of the researcher, his or her experiences and on the academic community the researcher is aiming to address. The individual lives through his or her experience. Experiences enhance the quality of the research and nourish it. As Moustakas (1994: 10) points out, the reflective-interpretative process appears in consciousness but also as an analysis and astute interpretation of the underlying conditions. It is difficult to argue, therefore, that comparative research studies can ignore the individual involved in the process; the individual, whose range of personal experiences, values, knowledge and understanding of the country or phenomenon under investigation may differ widely from those of others involved in the study, and that is, not only relation to his or her own country but also in relation to the other country or countries involved in the study. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the individual researcher can dissociate him- or herself from the phenomenon and remain an ‘objective’ outsider without clarification of the subjective element on the basis of reflection. In other words, it is difficult to see how any research study does not
contain at least some elements of interpretation within it, which may or may not be explicitly stated or of which the researcher may not even be aware.

Theoretical perspectives

So why the need to refer to methodological theories? Mercer (in Walford 1991: 42) offers the following explanation: “One function of theories is to set the agendas for research – to generate certain kinds of questions which the research will attempt to answer. Another function is to provide a ‘universe of discourse’ within which the discussion and explanation of research findings can take place.” Guba and Lincoln (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 107) refer to a paradigm in research terms as a “set of beliefs that deals with ultimates and first principles. A paradigm presents a world view that defines for its holder, the nature of the ‘world’, and the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships in that world. These beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way of establishing truthfulness.” In other words, we communicate, both in spoken and written form, about how we see ourselves in relation to others and the world around us and how what we intend to do to fit into this view of the world.

Comparative education was founded on principles of naturalist inquiry or positivism. What is seen as characterising positivism is the striving for principles or generalisations as a set of law-like accounts that enable action to be predicted and controlled. Phenomenology, in contrast, is aiming for an understanding of the perspective an individual may bring into the research through case studies or ethnographic studies which focus on the language and interaction of participants while critical theory is seen as having a greater interest in emancipation, the
sensitising of people, through critical analysis, the power relationships in their own contexts as well as causes and consequences of their own actions (Gibson in Day, Calderhead, Denicolo 1993: 1). All have their own pitfalls. However, Walford (1991: 2) points out that “it is now widely recognised that the careful objective, step-by-step model of the research process is actually a fraud and that within natural sciences as well as social science, the standard way in which research methods are taught and real research is often written up for publication perpetuates the myth of objectivity.”

The positivist tradition in scientific methodology is based upon the principle that the only reliable knowledge of any field of phenomena reduces the knowledge of particular instances of patterns and sensations. Laws are treated as probabilistic generalisations of descriptions of such patterns. The sole role of laws is to facilitate the prediction of future sensory experience. “For a positivist, the task of understanding a theory is exhausted by two processes. The analysis of theoretical discourse is aimed to reveal logical structure. The empirical content of the theory is supposed to be brought to light by identifying those logical consequences of the set of laws which purport to describe observations” (Harré in Reason and Rowan 1997: 3). Positivism, therefore, relies on rigour and an objective, a ‘value free’ approach while critical theory and interpretation accept subjectivity, values and ethics. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 100) refer to the four criteria applied to disciplined positivist inquiry: internal validity, the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question; external validity, the degree of which findings can be generalised to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred; reliability, the extent to which findings can be replicated, or reproduced, by another inquirer; and objectivity, the extent of which findings are free from bias. Critics of positivism or postpositivism
maintain that such inquiries are not able to deal adequately with the uniqueness of experiences nor with issues surrounding the *emic* (case-based, idiographic) and *etic* (generalising, positivist) positions.

However, approaches to research and research paradigms follow fashions throughout their own historical development. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4) refer to the researcher as a *bricoleur* which, in essence, means a 'jack of all trades or a kind of do-it-yourself person'. In other words a *bricoleur* uses tools or methods whichever seem most appropriate including ones invented by him- or herself. Much depends on the questions that have been asked and on the context to which they refer. The multiple use of methods, or triangulation, including empirical evidence, therefore, depends on the phenomenon in question. This multiplicity is best understood as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth. Important, too, is the interactive process shaped by the researcher’s personal history and biography, gender, class and ethnicity. It is a dense, complex, reflective process involving all the actors to be researched as well as the researcher. To complicate matters further, postpositivism, too, relies on multiple methods as a way of capturing as much reality as possible. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the discovery and verification of theories. Traditional evaluation criteria, such as internal and external validity, are stressed, as is the use of qualitative procedures that lend themselves to structured analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers refer to or even employ methods appropriate to the seemingly opposing theoretical perspective. Both, however, are concerned with the individual’s point of view. It is a question of scale, emphasis and balance. This tolerant view, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 5), is not shared by everyone. “Many members of the critical theory, constructivist, poststructural and postmodern
school of thought reject positivist and postpositivist criteria when evaluating their own work, and contend that these criteria reproduce only a certain kind of science, a science that silences too many voices.” These researchers seek alternative models and methods for evaluating their work including emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts and dialogues with subjects.

Within the interpretive paradigm three areas of approaches seem particularly relevant to me: certain aspects of phenomenology, hermeneutics and what might come under the broad heading of constructivism. At its most simple level phenomenology relates to my way of experiencing and interpreting the world around me, hermeneutics to the interpretation of texts and constructivism to the construction of knowledge in the sense that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as to construct or make it. The term phenomenology, as Patton points out, has become so widely used that its meaning has become confused. “Sometimes phenomenology is viewed as a paradigm, sometimes as a philosophy or it is sometimes even viewed as synonymous with qualitative inquiry” (Patton 1990: 68). The multidisciplinary movement, influenced particularly by German philosophy (Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Hegel and Kant) has different schools of thought and sets of assumption. However, all refer to the individual’s experiences, knowledge of life, images, theories, ideas, values and attitudes which are applied to aspects of experiences to make these meaningful (Holstein and Gubrium in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 263). What appears in consciousness is a phenomenon. Moustakas (1994:26) refers to the word phenomenon as stemming from the Greek phaenestai, to flare up, to show itself, to appear. Thus the phenomenon means to bring to light, to place in brightness, to
show itself in itself, the totality of what lies before us in the light of the day
(Heidegger 1977: 74-75). It follows that any phenomenon is a suitable starting
point for investigation. Husserl (1967: 257) refers to two important concepts which
underpin much of his writings: the concepts of noema and noemis. He illustrates
his thinking the following way:

Let us suppose that we are looking with pleasure in a garden at a
blossoming apple-tree, at the fresh young green of the lawn, and so
forth. The perception and pleasure that accompanies it is obviously
not that which at the same time is perceived and which gives
pleasure. From the natural standpoint the apple-tree is something
that exists in the transcendent reality of space, and the perception as
well as the pleasure a psychical state which we enjoy as real human
beings. Between the one and the other real being (Realen), the real
man or the real perception on the one hand, and the real tree on the
other, there subsists real elation. Now in such conditions of
experience, and in certain cases it may be that the perception is a
mere ‘hallucination’, and that the perceived, this apple-tree that
stands before us, does not exist in the real world. The objective
relation which was previously thought of as really subsisting is now
disturbed. Nothing remains but the perception; there is nothing real
out there to which it relates. (Husserl 1967: 258)

Schutz (1970: 118), in a similar vein, refers to a cherry tree: “If I recognise this
particular cherry tree in my garden as the same tree I saw yesterday, although in
another light and with another shade of colour, this is merely because I know the
typical way in which this unique object appears in its surroundings.” He continues to
refer to the pre-experience of cherry trees in general, plants in general, and the
‘objects of the outer world’. Each of these has a typical style of being experienced.
Moustakas interprets Husserl by stating that:

In reflecting on what one has seen and described, one is coming to
an understanding of meanings that have been concealed. What one
sees, each time one looks at something or judges something, is its
noema, the perceived as such and judged as such. Inherent in this process are many meanings, the noemata that connect or synthesize in such a way that one comes to know not only parts or aspects of a thing but also the unity or wholeness...

With reference to the noematically, the meaning is precisely what is given in the act of perceiving, remembering or judging, just what is intended, what appears, and what is presented; only that is the focus and emphasis if the noematic phases that are always involved in understanding what something is and something means (Moustakas 1994: 70-71, his italics).

Whether one perceives or imagines or judges something, shifts are bound to occur as one looks from a different frame of reference, mood, or internal locus. When one looks with confidence what one sees will be radically different than when one looks with doubt. What at first appears plain and simple, suddenly becomes filled with ambiguity – all of which can be applied to my approach to this study. I am aware that what might be my perception of matters to be discussed in subsequent chapters, are my own noema and noemis and hence is likely to differ from someone else’s. In other words, I perceive, let us say, aspects of German culture or of adult education, on the basis of my experience, reflection and research, an approach which is not easily generalised or objectified. Someone else is bound to view the same phenomenon from a different angle and hence draw different conclusions. The interpretivist believes that to understand this world of meaning one must interpret it. “The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it offers the inquirer’s constructions of the actors one studies” (Schwandt in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 118). Interpretivist thinking is linked to notions of the Verstehen (deep level interpretive understanding) tradition in sociology, and the critiques of natural sciences and positivism while the
goal of the latter is scientific explanation (*Erklären*). Weber (cited in Runciman 1972:42) draws on two related distinctions between those explanations which do and those which don’t have reference to general laws. The first of these is between ‘direct’ (*aktuell*), such as $2+2=4$, and ‘explanatory’ (*erklärend*) and understanding of why certain actions are taken and the complexity of subjective meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*). Both concepts, *Erklären* and *Verstehen*, are interwoven with notions of interpretation and the struggle with the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity and to what extent subjective experiences can be objectified. There seems to be general agreement that meaning is at the heart of perceiving and understanding.

The focus on consciousness and experience is also central to the study of hermeneutics. Schutz writes:

I experience the world within my actual reach as an element or phase of my unique biographical situation, and this involves a transcending of the Here and Now to which it belongs. To my unique biographical situation pertain, among many other things, my recollections of the world within my reach in the past but no longer within it since I moved from the There to Here, and my anticipation of the world to come within my reach and which I must move from Here to another There in order to bring it into my reach. I know or assume that, disregarding technical obstacles and other limitations, such as the principal irretrievability of the past, I can bring my recollected world back to my actual reach if I return to whence I came (world within restorable reach); I expect also to find it substantially the same (although, perhaps, changed) as I had experienced it while it was within my actual reach; and I will know or assume also that what is now within my actual reach will go out of my reach when I move away but will be, in principle, restorable when I later return. (Schutz 1970:98)

The term ‘hermeneutics’ covers a disparate assortment of alternatives and, not surprisingly, defies straightforward and concise definition. Hermeneutics as a
methodological tool in the social sciences - referred to by Gadamer (1965: 477) as a *Hilfsdisziplin* (auxilliary discipline) - is traced back to the works of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Schleiermacher’s work relates to the interpretation of ancient texts and the understanding of deeper structures, which underlie these texts – again of particular importance to any kind of comparative study. It seeks to ensure a deeper understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which these texts were created and relate to any other factor, which might have influenced the author’s thinking at the time of writing. Dilthey’s views were influenced by Kant, at least partially; though he could not accept Kant’s postulation that one area of knowledge, the physical sciences, is normative for inquiry. The philosophical hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer is concerned with the ontological condition of understanding or being-in-world. It considers “that we do not simply live our lives in time and through language; rather, we are our history. The fact that language and history are both the condition and limit of understanding is what makes the process of meaning construction hermeneutical (Schwandt in Denzin Lincoln 1994: 120, his italics). For Gadamer, the past has a truly pervasive power in the phenomenon of understanding. The role of the past cannot be restricted to merely supplying the texts or events that make up the objects of interpretation. Thus Gadamer develops a conception of understanding that takes the interpreter’s present participation in history into account in a central way. Gadamer states:

The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable. Now if what we have before our eyes is not only the artistic tradition of a people, or a historical tradition, or the principles of modern science in its hermeneutical precondition but rather the whole of our experience, then we have succeeded, I think, in joining the experiences to our own universal and human experience of life (Gadamer 1976: 13).
Dilthey's earlier strand of hermeneutic science is an epistemology or methodology for understanding objectifications. It involves the art of reading texts so that the intention and meaning behind appearances are fully understood. Here the relationship between science, art and history is at the heart of hermeneutic design and methodology (Moustakas 1994: 9). This interrelationship between the direct conscious description of experience and the underlying dynamics or structures that account for that experience, provides a central meaning and unity that enables one to understand the substance and essence of that experience. Hermeneutic analysis is, therefore, required in order to arrive at an understanding of a text which is embedded in its own cultural, historical and social context. The reading of texts just as much as approaches to biographical research and to research in historical social science is also important, it seems to me, to research in comparative adult education (see the Leeds Studies 1990 etc, for example). Both stress the importance of individual experience, language, meaning and understanding. Any phenomenon, it is argued, must be understood in its full historical context. To grasp historical information one must have a point of view, including an interpretive framework that includes some notion of the meaning of history. Tuchman (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 306) refers to the 'meaning' debates which occupy historians and confirms that there are no simple answers to questions about the meaning of history just as there are none about the meaning of life itself.

Social historians, who are wedded to notions of positivism, find postmodernism antithetical. They accept basic histiographic rules about reliability and validity of facts and sources. They do not accept the multivocal nature of texts accepted by others and that each phenomenon can be interpreted in many different ways. Texts are to be analysed as parts of webs or systems of signification that may be viewed as a set of language system because language systems are characteristic of an era, a place, class
or situation (Tuchman page 315). Poststructuralists take these debates further. Their central tenet is that all texts are multivocal, there is no such thing as a ‘true’ or ‘objective’ reading of a text, that all texts either consciously or unconsciously include allusions to other texts, so that they make themselves open to multiple reading.

Tuchman (page 317) sums up her understanding of these debates by stating that these, though familiar and contested, are meaningful in themselves. “The crisis in historiography speaks of the general crisis of meaning and knowing that afflicts our own episteme.”

Much of comparative research is based on the interpretation of texts and data taken from a variety of sources. Comparativists, therefore, mediate between their own cultural and historical knowledge and understanding, the source material and the likely academic community the researcher aims to address. Interpretative approaches, it can be argued, do not suffice for comparative purposes, since the emphases on individual interpretation of experiences are, in essence, not generalisable.

Furthermore, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to investigate a phenomenon in a different country without reference to some form of empirical data of that country and to place these in the appropriate historical and social context. However, data such as statistics, particularly those taken from different cultural backgrounds, need some sort of contextualisation, explanation and verification if the information they seek to convey has some kind of meaning. When reading academic papers, it is therefore desirable, as Black (1993: 7) argues, not only to understand the point the author is trying to make and defend, but also to begin to evaluate any claims the author may make. This is, as he argues, usually not a simple matter of either accepting or rejecting the study, but assigning a relative value to the claims made, based on the quality of
the research, though the question of quality of research may be confounded by the fact that some shortcomings of published work will simply be attributable to poor writing style as opposed to an inappropriate research design or faulty procedure.

Within the boundaries of this thesis I have opted for the *emic* rather than *etic* position. My purpose is, therefore, not related to the notion of *erklären* as is the case in many comparative studies, but much more to *verstehen*. I am seeking to understand and construct my own knowledge not within the boundaries of a homogenous reality as if that reality was everywhere and the same for everyone, but within acceptance of different people in different positions and different moments and different realities. In other words, I am concerned with the development and construction of meaning, knowledge and understanding not only implicitly in relation to myself but also explicitly in relation to others. In the words of Shotter (1993: 18), “we move from a modern world towards a postmodern world to confront the times in which we live, we begin to realise that our reality is often a much more disorderly, fragmented, and heterogeneous affair than we had previously thought.” Shotter is concerned with the knowledge, a special kind of knowledge, to do with how to be a person of this or that according to the culture into which one develops as a child. He stresses the developmental aspect in relation to knowledge which does not have to be finalised or formalised before it can be applied. Shotter writes about a third kind of knowledge, that is not theoretical (knowing that) nor a knowledge-in-practice, or merely knowledge, or craft or skills (knowing how) but a knowledge which is joint knowledge, knowledge held in common with others. “It is a third kind of knowledge, *sui generis*, that cannot be reduced to either of the other two, the kind of knowledge one has from within a situation, a group, a social institution, or society; it is what we
might call ‘knowing from’ (page 19). In other words, it is a kind of knowledge which evolves out of the environment in which we find ourselves. It is not a pre-determined knowledge but one which, in the words of Shotter, "is an everyday process, involving a myriad of spontaneous, responsive, practical, unselfconscious, but contested interactions, we unknowingly shape or construct between ourselves" (page 21). Guba and Lincoln (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994:113) propose that knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is relative consensus among those competent to interpret the substance of construction. Multiple ‘knowledge’ can co-exist, when equally competent interpreters disagree depending on social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors that differentiate the interpreters. These constructions are subject to continuous revision, with changes most likely to occur when relatively different constructions are brought into juxtaposition in a dialectical context. Knowledge is therefore accumulated only in a relative sense through the information of ever more informed and sophisticated constructions via the hermeneutical, dialectical process. In other words, I have approached this thesis in relation to my own experiences and my own being in the understanding that I will construct knowledge and understanding in interaction with others as part of the process with which I am engaged.

Method and approach

In terms of research methodology the interpretive approach is laden with ambiguities. There is no prescribed method or technique which can be applied. It offers, however, a rejection of a scientific method which eliminates the subjective judgement as much as it is possible, while the interpretive approach is pulling in the opposite direction. It
is therefore in danger of appearing 'woolly.' However, the understanding of a method here is less like the application of rules and more like a casuistic activity of using ethical principles to guide the making of decisions or interpretations. Steier (1991:3) states that ethics must become a part of research through such responsibilities. I, therefore, aim to justify my approach by also referring to Schwandt (in Denzin and Lincoln 1994:122) who states:

One seeks to make a responsible decision and give good reasons for one's actions, but the application of ethical principles does not permit the elimination of judgement on the part of the decision maker. In fact, to be rational in this situation demands or requires the exercise of judgement (not the following of procedures and rules) and the making of interpretation. The interpretation or decision cannot properly be said to be verifiable or testable. Rather, at best, we can appraise the interpretation by applying norms or criteria that are compatible with the very condition that demands that we interpret in the first place. Hence to judge an interpretation we must use criteria such as thoroughness, coherence, comprehensiveness and so forth, and ask whether the interpretation is useful, worthy of adoption, and so on (Schwandt in Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 122).

In order to be thorough I have undertaken extensive literature research in adult education, comparative adult education, comparative education and also referred to related fields such a sociology, history, anthropology amongst others. Wherever appropriate I have read and cited German texts as well as Anglo-American ones though not in parallel or in the sense of contrastive analysis, much more where it seemed relevant and important to me. In addition, I have referred to areas of language studies, be it in pure/applied linguistics or in language pedagogy – again as it seemed appropriate to me.
From time to time I have made use of German texts and cited these in German. Unless otherwise stated, I take responsibility for their translation into English.

One of the complexities rests in the fact that increasingly scholars move across disciplines: cultural studies and the study of representation are examples. Furthermore, I am aware that there are trends and fashions in scholarly debates. It has sometimes been a difficult task to establish just which discipline or school of thought various authors represented. However, adult education itself is made up of a range of source disciplines and eclecticism is one of its key characteristics as stated earlier. It is its strength and weakness at one and the same time. Aware of these pitfalls I have, whenever appropriate and possible, made reference to the source discipline and selected what I consider to be reliable data taken from official sources whenever it was deemed to be important to sustain the argument.

In the course of this study, I have a talked informally to a number of scholars and adult educators both in Britain and Germany, who, often by chance, helped me clarify my thinking. I have talked more formally to a) Jan Ebben, Referent of the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband (DVV) and b) Ekkehard Nuissl, Director of the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE) and indicated these conversations throughout the chapters as they occurred.

In addition, I have made use of previous researches I have undertaken, particularly in relation to adult education in both Britain and Germany and language teaching. I am aware that my thinking has been influenced by experiences I have had both as a teacher of adults and as an academic member of staff in a university. These relate to
issues raised by students of adult education in German universities and student exchanges with German students studying adult education in this country. I have also been influenced by participation in international conferences on adult education and language teaching. Here I became aware of, and sensitive to, cross-cultural misinterpretations and language difficulties, particularly in the context of German-speaking countries in relation to Anglo-American ones.

**Boundaries and limitations**

In the course of this study I have referred mainly to Britain and Germany, though I am aware that some postmodernists in comparative education attack Eurocentrism and seek to open knowledge to postcolonial experiences and non-Western cultural codes and interpretations (Paulstone 1990:440). My stance should not be accepted as an indication of personal bias or ignorance but simply as a means to contain the multifarious sets of variations and complexities within my own areas of knowledge and experience.

To illustrate points I have embedded examples of comparative adult continuing education theories and practices in both Britain and Germany throughout the text. It is important to accept these as illustrations only and not as a comprehensive comparative study in its own right.

I have chosen to explore one particular approach in relation to a) phenomenology and the interpretation of cultural meaning and b) to the modern or post-modern context in light of increasing globalisation and Europeanisation. I have done so for several reasons: this approach reflects more closely my own area of interest, experience and
knowledge; this approach has rarely been explored in both comparative adult education and comparative education where scholars, in the main, tend to concentrate on either on macro-sociological or systems-related issues.

I am aware of the fact that I have not always been consistent in the use of concepts and terminologies. For example, occasionally I have referred to ‘adult education’, sometimes to ‘adult continuing education’ or the ‘education of adults’, as it seemed expedient at the time. In common with other scholars, I have reservations about narrow and binding definitions and hope that the degree of flexibility employed is acceptable within the context of this study. Aspin and Chapman (2000: 4) confirm my views when they state that in a “post-empiricist approach” the quest for “essential” definitions rarely further understanding particularly in a cross- or intercultural context. The presumption encapsulates a mistaken view of meaning and intelligibility. Following this point, it seems important to refer to the underlying assumptions and practical implications as they occur in different spatial and temporal contexts rather than worry too much about linguistic precision.

To sum up: bearing ethical considerations referred to earlier on in mind, I have aimed to be thorough and comprehensive without wanting to eliminate my own creative thinking. The key questions underpinning this thesis rest upon the hypothesis that there is validity in undertaking studies in comparative adult education and that hitherto theoretical approaches have not accommodated contemporary aspects of postmodernity and globalisation as they affect adult education. The question to be asked relate to research approaches to comparative research taking phenomenological and intercultural dimensions into account.
Before I can begin to develop my line of thinking, however, I need to explore issues in relation to both comparative adult education and comparative education and the socio-cultural contexts in which these arose. This will be my task in the following chapter.
Chapter 3

Comparative adult education: an overview

The study of hermeneutics stipulates that texts have to be understood within the socio-cultural context in which they were created. In relation to the early beginnings of comparative adult education one might argue, therefore, that a glance at 1960s and early 1970s becomes an unavoidable task. During the 1960s adult education activities in Western Europe expanded in range and quantity as never before (Titmus 1981: 2). Kelly (1992: 350-360) cites a series of statistics ranging from courses in local adult education institutes to the provision of liberal studies in university departments, all of which point to an overall growth during post-war period and in particular the 1960s. This expansion led to a wider provision of training courses for the growing number of full-time and part-time staff and a rapidly growing interest in adult education research (Fieldhouse 1996: 220-221). It was a time of optimism and expansion, that is, until 1973 when the oil crisis triggered massive unemployment and government intervention in adult education. The expansion of adult education in the then West Germany during the 1960s is also noted by Arnold (1988), Schlutz (in Mader 1993), Pöggeler (in Jarvis 1992a), Nuissl (1994), Tietgens (1994) among others. The late 1950s and earlier years of the 1960s was a time of the so-called Wirtschaftswunder in Germany which was geared to labour intensive production markets and worldwide export. The boom itself stimulated demand for not only better working conditions for the home work force – but also for more and better trained workers. It was not until the building of the Wall between East and West
Germany in 1961 that the flow of workers from the East ceased. Consequently, the number of migrant workers, who were largely less skilled than the home workforce, had increased from about 280,000 in 1960 to 2.6 million in 1973 though later the figure was boosted by the number of dependants which followed earlier migrants to Germany (Bade 1983: 67).

The mid-1960s, however, also witnessed the start of the Vietnamese War which, in due course, led to worldwide antiwar as well as anti-nuclear and in the US anti-race discrimination mass demonstrations. In 1968 France and West Germany, in particular, experienced mass student revolts and street riots culminating in far-reaching reforms of the German university system. The hitherto relative political and economic stability of the Western world had taken its first serious knocks. The Sixties also produced the political radicalism of the New Left. Educational radicals became active in Britain and in international organisations such as UNESCO and the ILO. Indeed, the New Left was an international phenomenon and many radicals were much influenced by ‘gurus’ such as Illich, Freire and Gelpi (Evans 1987:8). It was a time which moved from certainties, self assurance and ideology to mounting uncertainties, increasing polarisation and self-doubt.

Having borne these developments in mind I argued in chapter 1 that nowadays the scholarly pursuit of comparative adult education was no longer an area of interest to adult education scholars – despite Reischmann’s optimistic statement concerning “an emerging field of study” (Reischmann, Bron and Jelenc 1999, book title). I referred to Titmus (1989: 543) who raises questions about its conceptual clarity and its contribution to adult education and to Künzel (1994), who is concerned that...
comparative adult education is no more than a heuristic tool with little to contribute contemorary debates. Summing up his thoughts about the state of arts Pachocinski (in Lichtner 1989:99) towards the end of the 1980s finds that "comparative research in education/ adult education despite enormous interest and effort has not contributed sufficiently enough, as expected, to the development of education and adult education and eo ipso has not resulted in any substantial accumulation of knowledge. Our knowledge about similarities and differences in surprisingly shaky."

Clarifying concepts

But what does comparative mean in a conceptual sense? Husén and Postlethwaite define comparisons the following way:

Comparisons can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit comparisons may involve a variety of contemporary societies that display reasonably similar characteristics or societies separated by time. They can also focus on different historical periods in a particular society. Implicit comparisons do not give equal attention to two or more societies or time periods. Inquiry into issues in a particular society or historical period may qualify as comparative as long as the analytic scheme can be extended to problems in other societies and periods (Husén and Postlethwaite 1994: 922).

To this day, however, it remains unclear if the term comparative adult education refers to a distinct field of study, a research method or simply a device for reflection involving similarities and differences in more than one country. Jarvis (1990: 72) emphasises the study of systems with his definition of comparative adult education:

**comparative adult education** The study of adult education systems and policies in order to learn about them and from them, and to
compare them and their origins. This is an empirical form of research rather than a normative one. Comparative adult education can occur within a country or internationally. It is also different from international adult education in which no comparison is made.

Jarvis, therefore, placed comparative adult education into an empirical research paradigm. Siddiqui (1993: 139) states that comparative adult education is essentially a research or an evaluative activity as it is intended to measure the nature of the extent of similarities and/or dissimilarities between two or more adult education phenomena. Historically, wherever there had been activities associated with the education of adults there were comparisons made among them, she maintains.

Nevertheless, the conceptual confusion about what is meant by the education of adults, let alone comparative adult education, gives an indication of the complexities involved. Harris (1980: 8) refers to the various attempts made by UNESCO to standardise different aspects of these activities. He points to language problems which emerged and proposes that the most meaningful concepts in any comparative study in a world context are those which relate to national patterns of provision, that is the total system, all of those involve institutions, organisations and activities for adult education. Lawson (in Hake, Morgan 1989: 11) does not agree. He points to the futility of such ventures by saying that, when embarking on the study of adult education, our conceptual frame of reference influences and colours our perception and determines the phenomena selected for description and analysis. “We are dealing with shifting and flexible concepts which are used in a range of Wittgensteinian ‘language’ games and we have to live with that fact.”

Knoll (in Reischmann, Bron, Jelenc 1999:20) uses both terms ‘international’ and
'comparative' in order to prevent mixing the results in the tendency to call every international study on adult education immediately comparative which few deserve. Kidd (in Charters 1981: 218) refers to normative values embedded in comparative studies and the need to explore similarities and differences in order to understand other cultures, institutions and peoples as well as one's own society and oneself and to become, by implication, a better person. The themes of 'learning' and 'understanding' are also referred to in statements made by Charters (1981: 3) about the purposes of comparative international adult education, which are to improve the lives of individuals by improving the performance of educators who help them. This can be achieved by giving adults knowledge and skills or by increasing understanding of and information about adult education for its own sake. Charters (1989: 3) defines comparative adult education simply as (a) statements about theory, principles, methodology and other topics of continuing education related to adult education and (b) comparative study to one or more situations. He sees 'intra-national adult education' as referring to the comparison of a topic on one or more situations within one country and 'international comparisons' as referring to two or more situations in different countries.

Halls (1990: 22), with reference to comparative education rather than to adult education, traces changes which have taken place over the past two decades as comparative studies have moved increasingly away from a descriptive, historical even philosophical function to one which is interpretative, etiological and even predictive, thereby following an important trend in the social sciences. Halls distinguishes between comparative studies, education abroad, international education and development education. He then subdivides comparative studies into comparative
pedagogy and intra-educational and intra-cultural analysis which he amplifies as follows: comparative pedagogy defines as the study of teaching and the classroom process in different countries, e.g. the development of the science of teaching through transatlantic borrowing as occurred in the 1960. Intra-educational and intra-cultural analysis investigates education at various levels, and also systematically researches historical, social, cultural, political, religious, economic and philosophical forces that partly determine and are partly determined by the character of education systems, and compares resultant outcomes in two or more systems, areas or even globally (page 24). However, it is not clear to what extent these definitions have gained wider acceptance by those either writing about comparative education or reporting comparative education studies. Expanding further on the confusion between comparative and international education Husén and Postelthwaite (1994: 918) refer to the former as a field of study that applies historical, philosophical, and social science theories and methods to international problems in education. Its equivalents in other fields of academic study, they state, are those dedicated to the trans-societal study of social institutions, such as comparative government, comparative economics, and comparative religion. Comparative education is primarily an academic and interdisciplinary pursuit. International education, on the other hand, fosters an international orientation in knowledge and attitudes and, among other initiatives, brings together students, teachers, and scholars from different nations to learn about and from each other – thereby again stressing normative values in these processes.

Kazamias and Schwartz (1977: 153) highlight the debate that has taken place over many years to establish whether comparative education is an art or science, whether it is a discipline in its own right or an area of study in which several disciplines are
brought to bear, whether it is a theoretical or an applied activity, and whether its techniques of analysis should be empirical-statistical, historical or philosophical. They confirm that concerns of this kind are to be expected in any kind of concept or technique to analyse social phenomena.

The disputed merit of a comparative study, however, is not confined to either initial or post-compulsory education. Disciplines or sub-disciplines such as comparative politics, comparative law, comparative religion belie the view that comparison does not provide conclusive arguments (Schriewer in Schriewer and Holmes 1992: 26). Conversely, there are those who do not consider cross-national research to be different from any other kind of research while others are only too well aware of the many interdependencies yet they consciously ignore the many stumbling blocks of the non-equivalents of concepts and a multitude of unknown variables interacting in an unknown context and influencing the research in unknown way. It can be argued that the very nature of sociological research is considered to be comparative and inherent to sociology, in as much as no social phenomenon can be studied in isolation (Øyen 1990: 5). Seen from the perspective of sociology, concepts such as cross-country, cross-national, cross-societal, trans-societal, cross-cultural, are both used as synonymous with comparative research in general and as denoting specific kinds of comparisons, although the specificity varies from one author to another. Øyen (1990: 1) draws attention to further complexities attached to any kind of comparative study. "None of the methodological and theoretical difficulties we have learned to live with can be ignored when we examine critically questions such as what is comparative research, and how we interpret similarities and differences in countries compared."
The problems are more likely to be exacerbated when another analytical level, filled with unknown variables, is added."

Similarly complex is the relationship between comparative (initial) education and comparative adult education, in Britain as elsewhere. In comparison to the former adult education scholars have come late to comparative research, indeed to any systematic forms of educational research. Kidd argues, that

our concerns go far beyond a single field called education. We are interested in what can be applied from comparative history or comparative sociology or any other discipline; we are concerned with the impact of events and happenings and circumstances upon the learning of people, activities which are rarely considered in the course of education. Accordingly, we have adopted as a generic term 'comparative studies' to include any phenomena that affect learning. (Kidd in Bown and Okedara 1981:34).

Titmus (1989: 541-543) regards adult comparative studies as having evolved independently, not as a subsection of, but as a supplement to, comparative education. He emphasises that, nevertheless, the purposes of comparative adult education ought to be broadly similar to those of comparative education though they are not equal, since expectations of achievement in the short or medium term are rather more limited. Knoll (in Lichtner 1989: 91) acknowledges a close relationship between comparative education and comparative adult education though he finds that this interaction cannot be rigidly interpreted. Comparative education is conceived, he argues, as a discipline which aims through its methods simultaneously to observe and to elucidate all areas of education from primary to further education. With regard to adult education, the lack of reliable data in adult education, Knoll insists, has prevented conclusions being drawn even from the starting point. He expresses views
which, rightly or wrongly, deprived comparative adult education of a sound platform on which to build from the onset.

**Historical dimensions in comparative education**

It would be futile to deny influences of comparative (school) education on comparative adult education. The pre-history of both is linked to the French scholar Marc-Antoine Jullien, who has since earned the status as the 'father' of comparative education, and his first comprehensive scheme of comparative study of education systems of 1817. Jullien had developed methods of research approved by inductionists ever since (Holmes 1981: 39). The essential features of Jullien's methods refer the collection of data by using objective observation, careful classification of data, formulation of hypotheses, collection of further confirming data and statements by which the validity of universal laws could be shown proved. Jullien's major achievement was the production of detailed guidelines for foreign researchers. Jullien's impact on what was a largely undisciplined, descriptive form of investigation was to foreshadow increased concern for statistical precision, quantification and a scientific approach to comparative international education. The influence of such quantitative social science had a major impact upon the field, particularly in North America during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s under the influence of comparativists within the social sciences paradigm such as Noah and Eckstein. The research paradigm was that of positivist science, statistical correlation and hypothesis testing (Crossley and Broadfoot 1992: 103).
The tension between precise comparative research methods and the ideals of comparative studies in the normative sense runs through most discussions on comparative studies. Sadler is frequently cited in this context. Sadler wrote in 1900

In studying foreign systems of education we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret inside. We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant our own. (quoted in Hans 1982: 3 among others).

Even nowadays these words have lost little of their intended spirit in the course of time.

The American Kandel (1933: XVIII), in his seminal pre-Second World War book, *Comparative Studies in Education*, expresses similar normative sentiments by stating that the educational system tended to regard its own problem as unique, and, therefore, regard educational practices of other countries as inapplicable. However, the chief value of a comparative approach to educational problems lie in the analysis of the causes which produced them, in a comparison of the differences between various systems and the reasons underlying them, and finally the solutions attempted.

The comparative approach, according to Kandel, demands an appreciation of the intangible, and the spiritual and cultural forces which underlie an educational system: the factors and forces outside the school matter even more than what goes on inside (1933: 4-5).
The fundamental thread running through Kandel's work is the relationship between education and the state, and the modern world and how different national systems of education had evolved against their historical and cultural contexts (Blake 1982: 3). Kandel's ideological orientation, at that point in time, bore strong similarities to British liberalism with its emphasis on limited state intervention with his lack of concern about economic realities and anti-science bias, all of which were found to be inadequate to the new thinking around structural functionalism and methodological empiricism that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in comparative education (Kazamias and Schwartz 1977, pages 153-176). Both Kandel and Hans (1982) had a strong sense of traditions that underlie education systems. Both frequently referred to concepts of one nation and nationhood, national characteristics and Hans in particular to racial and religious characteristics. Hans (1982: 5) sought to discover the underlying principles which govern the development of all national systems of education. Pre-eminently a historian, he wrote: "The first step is to study each national system separately in its historical setting, and it close connection with the development of national character and culture" (Hans 1982: 7). Education, as other sciences, was based on facts and observations, which should be arranged in analytical tables, easily compared, in order to deduce principles and definite rules. Education should become a positive science instead of being ruled by narrow and limited opinions, by whims and arbitrary decisions of administrators, to be turned away from the direct line with should follow, either by prejudice of the blind routine or by spirit of some system and innovation (Hans 1982: 1). Mallison's work national characteristics in the 1950s and 1960s is also worth noting (see chapter 4). He (1974: 4) refers to the early beginnings of a civilisation, which moved gradually from primitive beginnings to a more complex and involved system. When that civilisation reaches its peak of attainment,
according to Mallison, then the 'national character' becomes the essential stabilising force allowing for further development and maturation only along fixed and clearly defined paths as if there were only one social order with defined structural relationships.

Following what can, nevertheless, be described as a fitful growth during the first half of the century, comparative education blossomed after the Second World War (Husén and Postelthwaite 1994: 920). The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of new thinking around structural functionalism and methodological empiricism. In the United States, the first professional association of comparativists was founded in 1956 while in 1968 the first International Committee of Comparative Education Societies, known from 1970 onwards as the World Council of Comparative Societies, was founded in Canada. Concurrently, too, the study of comparative education continued to expand within major universities in the United States and Canada while in Britain the University of London and in German universities in Frankfurt, Bochum, Hamburg, Berlin established programmes for comparative education as did many other countries across the world around the same time. Peterson, in the introduction to the first journal of Comparative Education, founded in 1964, states that comparative education was not yet established as discipline in its own right. "We have not yet delimited a field of observed and recorded fact which is the special field of a 'comparativist' as opposed to a 'educationist'; nor have we perfected a methodology which would justify us in claiming that comparative education had achieved the status of positive science" (Peterson 1964: 1).
Comparative adult education - early beginnings

The notion of exploring other national systems, of travelling and broadening one's mind by observing foreign practices in order to implant what was valuable and worth while at home in the spirit of peace, mutuality and tolerance permeated not only the period after 1945. Following the First World War the ethos of adult education provided an ideal forum for the spirit of internationalism precisely because of its pluralistic traditions. As early as 1918 Mansbridge founded the World Association for Adult Education, out of which sprang in turn the British Institute of Adult Education. The key motives were adult education as a forum for international understanding and solidarity - hence the enrichment of knowledge and workers' education in an international context with inspiration and cross-cultural transference of thoughts, ideas and practical solutions of particular significance (Künzel in Knoll and Künzel 1980: 10-13).

The concept of cross-cultural transference or cultural borrowing is embedded in many of the earlier comparative studies, particularly in the period between 1880 and 1930 (Friedenthal-Haase, Hake and Marriott 1991). It refers to adapting what was regarded as the best of educational policies and practices in other countries to needs and circumstances at home. Examples can be found in the histories of university extension movements, the Danish and Scandinavian High Schools, the Workers' Educational Association and, more recently, the reshaping of adult education in West Germany by the British following the Second World War (see, for example, Knoll 1996, Titmus in Friedenthal Haase 1991, Friedenthal-Haase and Zeilhuber-Vogel, 1993, Hearnden 1978, Wörrmann 1985). Friedenthal-Haase, Hake and Marriot (1991: 3) state that the
phenomenon of borrowing between cultures has long enjoyed a significant place in
the literature of historical and comparative adult education. In their discussion they
direct attention to the theories of cross-cultural diffusion and adaptation of
innovations and to theories of cultural perceptions. With regard to historical studies in
adult education they find that these have adopted a more hermeneutical or cultural
approach to the explanation of why and how specific adult education ideas and
practices have been diffused and adopted in other countries. Harris (1980: 34-35)
considers that common languages and religious values such as protestantism can
explain why some countries have influenced each other more than others. Titmus (in
Friedenthal-Haase et. al. 1991:21), on the other hand, questions the notion of cultural
borrowing and the permanency of such undertakings and the validity as well the
practicalities and outcomes of such processes, which were and are, according to him,
vastly underresearched within adult education. However, the fundamental acceptance
of 'otherness' coupled with an almost spiritual belief in nationhood and a homogenous
society was fundamental to the adult educators during the early part of this century.

The post Second World War period witnessed an increased interest and self-
confidence in an international context. International Conferences on Adult Education
in Elsinore (1949), Montreal (1960), Tokyo (1972) and Paris (1985) were regarded by
Bhola as probably the most important in the history of adult education (Bhola 1989).
The Montreal conference of 1960 noted that research into school education had gone
far, but little attention had been paid by the universities to adult education while
twelve years later in Tokyo universities were urged to recognise adult education as a
professional discipline and allocate to it the needed resources for the conduct of
research and training in the new discipline. The spirit of international co-operation
had, according to Bhola, "come far from pious pronouncements about international co-operation" and made some very concrete suggestions about the process and content of such co-operation with the aim of establishing research centres and documentation centres across nations thereby strengthening the need for comparative analysis and research. Undoubtedly, in the years following the Second World War adult education required an ideology as well as a philosophy in its own right. Bhola (1989: 20) states that ideology is more than a philosophy. It is a more explicitly formulated, more systematically integrated, more coherent and more authoritative set of cognitive beliefs about 'man and society'. Ideology covers particularly those ideas and objectives that shape a society's political and social procedures.

Systematic effort towards comparisons of adult education systems began with the Exeter Conference in 1966, which was sponsored by the International Congress of University Adult Education (ICUEA) and which constituted at that time a significant step forward, essential to the understanding of comparative adult education. The Exeter conference was ambitious in scope. It sought to study five countries, each chosen for pragmatic reasons, each outlining (1) the total educational system of that country; (2) broad questions and opinions about adult education; and (3) specific questions about the nature and scope of adult education. Its purpose was: to review and refine a conceptual framework for examining adult education and to examine and describe similarities and differences in such activities in line with this conceptual framework; to develop research activities and to make specific suggestions to appropriate national and international agencies about the need for support in carrying out research and international activities (Liveright and Haygood 1968: 2).
The Exeter Conference sought to establish comparative adult education in its own right. The emphasis was on methodologies involving similarities and differences and the desirability of a cross-cultural approach, which should be both anthropological, and andragogic. "Only by understanding the basic cultural and social forces in different countries, and by realising how these factors influence the total education system, will it be possible to gain true understanding of adult education enterprise and activities in a particular country and to develop theories and studies to compare the influence of these factors on adult education in different countries" (page 11). Clearly, the need to undertake research and to suggest important hypotheses about the development, usefulness, and administration of adult education, and also the increased effectiveness of plans and programmes of action to be developed in several countries points to a sense of confidence and mission of adult educationists at that particular point in time.

With hindsight of several years, Harris (1980:13) is somewhat dismissive in his reference to the Exeter Conference during which "a series of tables on adult education systems in different countries" was presented. "The total impact of all these tables is, one must admit, likely to stun any but the most highly committed students. He who wishes can read and can attempt to interpret and to compare answers contributed by a confusing variety of contributors against a wide variety of cultural attitudes. One can still puzzle over the uses which might be made of the resulting taxonomy and the detailed categorisation beyond some clarification of the babble of language meanings which we study across cultural barriers." However, the Exeter conference succeeded in stimulating interest in an emerging field of study.
Kidd's visions of the normative values and purposes of comparative adult education (Kidd in Bennett, Kidd and Kulich 1975:10 and in Charters 1981:220) are frequently mentioned in this context. These may be considered vocational or serve the purpose of satisfying liberal and humane curiosity while for others the search was for hypotheses and clues for evaluation (his italics). These goals are:

- to become better informed about the educational systems for adults in other countries;
- to become better informed about the ways in which people in other cultures have carried out certain social functions by means of education;
- to become better informed about the historical roots of certain activities and thus develop criteria for assessing contemporary developments and testing possible outcomes;
- to understand better the educational forms and systems operating in one's own country;
- to satisfy an interest in how other human beings live and learn;
- to understand oneself better; to reveal how one's own cultural biases and personal attributes affect one's judgement about possible ways of carrying out transactions.

These goals, according to Kidd "are all positive goals. Some people would also like to include as a significant role the capacity to withstand pressures, to accept alien practices, or to resist those aspects that are inimical to the host culture. Insights into cultural differences and values might be employed for resisting change. In any such consideration, of course, one's values are central" (in Bennett, Kidd and Kulich 1975:11). On closer inspection, however, none of these goals necessitate comparative
approaches. All of these can be achieved within the remits of international adult education, though Kidd does also refer to rigorous and consistent methods and to painstaking work in collecting and analysing data as well as to similarities in human need and human responses to need, and that there may be ways of tapping and ordering these similarities. It is worth remembering Kidd for his contribution to adult education in general rather than just to comparative adult education. His involvement with UNESCO and the World Conferences and his belief in adult education as a world movement had been deeply influenced by what came to be known as Christian humanism (Thomas in Jarvis 1987: 198). In the somewhat ideological language of an adult educator of his time, he anticipated that comparative studies might become a kind of universal language, perhaps as universal and significant as science. "That stage may be far ahead, but the possibility should be a major incentive" (Kidd in Bown and Okedara 1981: 35). Yet even in the contemporary context of a postmodern society the rationale for comparative adult education is given by Charters (in Reischmann, Bron, Jelenc 1999:55) in somewhat idealistic terms. He states that the world is moving toward a global international community or entity, hence the need is to gather information about similarities and differences in order that international developments may proceed more efficiently and effectively. Research in comparative adult education, he argues, could assist in the search for peace. Comparative adult education should also focus on the mission of adult education, that is, on learning by adults. Having knowledge about adult learning at the international level would enable adults to maximise their learning opportunities.
Juxtaposition - a methodological approach

Most of the early discussions in adult education circles with an interest to pursue comparative studies were influenced by natural science research perspectives, which argue that researchers should start from the objective observation and the recording of facts. These facts should then be interpreted from a number of perspectives, that is, the economic, sociological, historical, political and technological perspective. The next stage is juxtaposition. Juxtaposition approaches are essentially embedded in the positivist paradigm with logical deduction based on prior assumptions. Early comparativists pursued the reliance on the gathering of statistical information, sets of data in relation to national systems. The notion of organising these sets of data into some kind of recognisable and transferable pattern alongside each other was promoted by Bereday in particular. In order to understand Bereday's thinking developed in his seminal work *Comparative Method in Education* (1964) one has to consider the likely reader he had in mind. In his preface, he states that the book is written for the layman and the student beginning to study the field. Bereday saw it as a major task to render clearly to the non-specialist what the field was or hopefully would be like in the future. Equally important is the temporal and social context in which the book was written. Thus Bereday refers to the school education background which prompted his comparative discussions, in the following way: "All American high school dropouts seemed sloppy, tee-shirted, life-adjusted mediocrities. By contrast, all British sixth-formers, for example, appeared solid, steady, academic performers" - a statement full of stereotypic assumptions and subjective values. Bereday concedes that the two sides of such a comparison seem "close enough to the truth to hurt" (1964: vii).
Bereday refers to the need to make sense out of the similarities and differences among educational systems and to catalogue educational practices across different national frontiers; and in such a catalogue each country would appear as one variant of the total store of mankind's educational experience. "If well set off, the like and contrasting colours of the world perspective will make each country a potential beneficiary of the lesson thus received" (page 4). Bereday sees the foremost justification for comparative education as for other comparative studies as intellectual. "Knowledge for its own sake is the sole ground upon which comparative education needs to make a stand in order to merit inclusion among other academic fields" (1964: 5).

Bereday proposes a two part approach: part one consists of 'area studies', concerned with one country or region, and part two of 'comparative studies', concerned with many countries or regions at the same time. Accordingly, area studies have a 'descriptive phase', or what he terms the geography of education concerned with the collection of purely pedagogical data. Bereday considers area studies not only legitimate but also indispensable. He suggests three fundamental aspects for preparing an area study: knowledge of the language, residence abroad and a never-ceasing watchfulness by the observers to control one's own cultural and personal bias. The comparative approach begins, according to his scheme, with juxtaposition. The consecutive listing presented above would lead at this stage to the search for a unifying concept and hypothesis. The next step is the comparison which entails a simultaneous treatment of all countries studied to test the hypothesis derived from juxtaposition. A comparison was the final analysis of the ordering process, "this
means not *laying out* but *highlighting* educational materials previously processed" (his italics, page 22). Bereday goes on to argue that the bridge which links area studies to comparative studies proper was the hardest point to cross in comparative education. With reference to complete comparison he distinguishes between two approaches. The first, the problem approach, enables students to survey comparative evidence in small segments. The second, the total approach, exposes the whole educational panorama. However, he warns, and herein lies a major dilemma, "no student of comparative education can attempt the total comparative approach described in the next section without life-long, full-time preparation for the task" and "this is an area fitting for a magnum opus or a researcher's career" (page 23).

Nevertheless, he argues, "even if such a comparative scheme is examined only so that it may be rejected, its teaching value is substantial" (page 27).

Bereday describes four steps the researcher has to take: first there is description, the systematic collection of pedagogical information in one country, then follows interpretation, the analysis in terms of social sciences. The next step is juxtaposition, a simultaneous review of several systems to determine the framework in which to compare them, and finally there is comparison. These four steps point the way to the future of comparative education (pages 27/28). It is these four relatively simple steps which sum up the Bereday model of juxtapositioning. It is not quite clear why Bereday's model of juxtapositioning was appealing. Perhaps the almost pictorial image of his typology is easily understood and remembered. His approach is almost simplistic, atheoretical and, above all, pragmatic. If taken literally, it is also one which for most is not ‘doable’ in a practical sense: few researchers would be prepared
to first learn the language of that country and then have a lifetime commitment to that one country and that area of study.

Titmus, too, (in Lichtner 1989: 256-257) finds the Bereday model too simple although he still bases his thinking around it. He suggests the following approach while making no claims for originality:

- Statement of general goal;
- Formulation of specific objectives;
- Selection of data to be sought;
- Obtaining of data;
  - Description, interpretation of phenomena under study in each situation;
  - Juxtaposition of description, interpretation etc.
- Identification of differences and similarities;
- Interpretation of similarities and differences.

Titmus advocates that this process should not be perceived as a simple linear progression of stages in chronological order, but as a network of interlocking loops. With reference to goals, he sees an interrelationship between the purposes of such a study and the method chosen, though he is not certain if methodological interests determined research goals or vice versa. The primary concern, he stipulates, should be with the process rather than the outcome. "Common sense suggests that one chooses what one wishes to do (goal) and then studies how to it (method)" (in Lichtner 1989: 258). In line with sound educational practices, one should move from the general to the specific which necessitates, in the end, confrontation with data selection.
However, there are difficulties. One cannot, he argues, be sure of recording all the data which constitute the phenomena or serve to explain them. It would almost certainly be too large a task anyway. Completely unselective collection of data, which according to Titmus, is recommended for the sake of greater objectivity, does not only fail to achieve the desired aim but it cannot be done. A selection of data, therefore, is inevitable, whether it is done consciously or not. Siddiqui (1993: 145) describes a somewhat more elaborate research approach, CIRTAD (Comparative International Research in Training and Development), which still accommodates juxtapositioning of similarities and differences but with reference to national cultures and intranational subcultures and other cultural systems. This can be achieved, she argues, with collaboration and networking with intercultural teams whose task it is to delve deep enough into the original sources of information about core and peripheral value systems of the cultures being compared. In her argument, however, Siddiqui ignores the individual scholar, who may or may not be bicultural or have an appreciation of the underlying cultural dimensions in a comparative study to which she refers.

Mounting uncertainties

Despite such lone voices as Siddiqui and Titmus, there is a sense that theoretical debates in comparative adult education, unlike those in comparative education, have stood still. The various conferences on comparative adult education, Oxford 1987, Rome 1988, Bamberg 1995 and Radovljica 1998, have done little to promote comparative adult education into the forefront of academic debate. Scholars in
comparative education, unlike those in comparative adult education, have at least questioned assumptions and sought to define their field by a number of different research orientations. Holmes developed a problem-solving approach in relation to planning and policy issues in school education (in Schriewer, Holmes 1992: 115). Others, notably Halls (Edwards, Holmes, Van de Graaf 1973: 118) refer to the culturalist approach in comparative education in relation to cultural relativism. Altbach and Kelly (1989: 11) discuss critical ethnography, and so on - all of which provoked a series of studies and discussions within their given time span and contexts.

The tension, however, between empirical research methods based on similarities and differences and between the outcomes of such studies in relation to their normative values has not been eased. Watson (1985: 2) with reference to school education and normative values laments that far from all students training to be teachers being made aware of the developments in other countries, the opposite is the case: fewer students are being introduced to comparative studies in education and fewer teacher trainers have a comparative dimension to their world. Even nowadays, in the 1990s, in spite of the infinite variety of data used by governments and supra-national bodies and pressure groups, concern is not to analyse cultural differences and national idiosyncrasies but to concentrate on international similarities, competitive league tables and comparable performance indicators (Watson 1994: 85).

In the meantime paradigm shifts in approaches to comparative education research caused further tensions. Positivist theories, for example, in comparative education stipulate that only empirical statements about education must be
studied and only scientific statements are meaningful, that is, for a proposition to be meaningful it must be testable or verifiable in principle, and for it to be regarded as true it must be subjected to an experiential test (Epstein in Schriewer and Holmes 1992: 5). Holmes (in Halls 1990: 77) confirms that researchers should start from objective observation and the recording of facts. These facts should then be interpreted from a number of perspectives. They stem from the economic, sociological, historical, political and technological perspective and that the next stage was juxtapositioning as outlined in this chapter. In a similar vein, and this time with particular reference to adult education, Charters (1989:3) states that a comparative study should extend beyond the description of data and/or juxtaposition of data to the drawing out of differences and similarities. The task of international comparative study was not to establish that these exist but to seek an explanation how these differences occur and, with reference to normative values, what we can learn from them. There are, however, serious challenges to comparative education which, it is argued, make all comparisons, at least those, which are positivistally defined and based on cross-societal generalisation, futile. These challenges come from those influenced by phenomenology and the interpretative paradigm (Epstein in Schriewer and Holmes (1992: 14). Epstein attempts to tackle the dilemma. Phenomenology, he states, does claim that positivist inquiry is by nature unavoidably biased and judgmental, and therefore represents a more extreme form of repudiation of positivism. Phenemonology rejects the assumptions of a positivist world and views as problematic the objective description of the world. He points out that for this purpose it was important to note that ‘comparison’, however disparately defined, seemed to violate phenomenological strictures.
Comparison was a device external to the interaction of the observed world.

Phenomenologists will therefore argue that the interpretive standpoint is inherently limited, and its findings not generalisable, because each individual perspective and attachment to meaning differs – arguments, bearing Husserl’s noema and noemis in mind, which are difficult to refute. “Thus phenomenologists may acknowledge that since general theory is the objective of positivism, interpretive studies are inconsequential to positivists. Yet is it is not only that they are inconsequential to some scholars; it is also patently evident that the findings of all interpretive studies are inherently incomparable” (Epstein in Schriewer and Holmes 1992: 15). Epstein concludes that comparativists have generally failed to notice how fundamentally incompatible certain rival epistemological orientations in comparative education have been. A few have sought a synthesis of these varying orientations, but they have not succeeded. Some investigations, he argues, explicitly employ both contextual and interpretive analysis and cross-national orientations, but these tend to serve the purpose of particular epistemology. Perhaps this argument is the most valid one, if comparative education, even comparative adult education, has anything to offer the globalising, postmodern world of today. Generalisability, one could argue, is a dubious concept, since anything generalised has to be ultimately accepted and understood by individuals in a personal and subjective manner.

**Conclusion and further questions**

Holmes (in Halls 1990) and Mitter (in Masemann and Welch, 1997:40) among others refer to societal changes which have taken place since the 1960s; shifts which, indeed,
reflect those which also occurred in adult education, and which, in the late seventies moved priorities towards intercultural education in multicultural societies. Mitter argues this shift was accompanied by a growing perception of micro-level education and social minorities and attention to cultural units based on ethnic and religious specificities on local communities. Thus multiculturalism alongside discrimination against women developed into key issues in comparative education. Mitter links these issues, worldwide in their dimension, to the postmodern revolt against the predominant theory of modernity which has been the consistent base for all preceding paradigms in comparative education. The pluridisciplinary, post-modernity debates have been inflamed, according to Mitter, as a concomitant to actual challenges in education, caused by market-driven policies, deregulation and self-management as well as the rapid advances in information technology. Mitter connects the term ‘grassroots’ with the growing weight of qualitative research methods as well as a revival of historical studies and the application of hermeneutics, which have a particularly long tradition in Germany and other European countries. A similar trend can be observed in neighbouring studies, cultural psychology, anthropology or ethnology – a trend which has moulded theoretical conceptions in research methodologies ever since. Griffin, with reference to the market models of adult education, considers comparative adult education to have been at the early stages of development. However, he pleads for the inclusion of ‘welfare state’ categories thereby reflecting the diverse political economies upon which societies are based. “This approach to comparative adult education would also stress more the fact that, at least in Western societies, social policies of adult education reflect disagreement, conflict and resistance. It has been stressed that social policies, for welfare in particular, are subject to opposing normative theories and ideologies. Unless
comparative adult education conveys some sense of the policy debate which goes on at the level of ‘political economy’ it will never entirely succeed in being truly comparative” (Griffin 1987: 46).

Maseman and Welch (1997: 395-396) confirm many of the issues outlined above. For at least the last twenty years, they write, forms of comparative methodology have been under attack from critics who asserted the rights of minority cultures, from those who rejected monolithic claims of scientific reason, and from those who opposed the dominance of the western modes of rationality and methods licensed in their names. And this, they argue, was no surprise, since similar critiques of similar methodologies had been made in the social sciences and philosophy for much of the 20th century. Maseman and Welch confirm that “at the same time, the post-war certainties and the confidence of the 1950s and 1960s was being eroded in many countries, and a growing argument mounted from both left and right, that the state itself was in crisis. This growing lack of confidence in any of the big answers, or grand theories, was increasingly underscored by a form of philosophy, which licensed such scepticism, indeed sited it at the core of its assumption. According to postmodernism, any form of totalising reason, or grand theory was rejected as part of a misplaced Enlightenment in the privileging of rationality.” They conclude: the danger of an unchallenged acceptance of postmodern sensibilities, however, in comparative education as elsewhere, is now obvious – that of throwing out the baby with the bath water (page 369). Furthermore, anti-positivists in comparative education argue that positivism with its emphasis on empiricism does not provide a sound basis for understanding social reality thereby making comparison unsound (Epstein in Schriewer and Holmes 1992: 14).
Many of these issues remain unresolved. It is not clear if comparative education, adult education, can remain restricted to a form of exercise in research methodology within the positivist paradigm or to what extent it has broken these boundaries and ventured into new territories. Most discussions seem to remain context-bound and interwoven with ties and connections which crosscut the socio-political system of the state and the cultural order. Notions of national systems, the nation-state, national characteristics are still a prominent part of the comparative discourse. The question needs to be asked: to what extent are concepts of national systems within the boundaries of nation state, national identity and national characteristics still valid nowadays in the context of multicultural societies, increasing regional consciousness and global heterogeneity? Are they really at the opposite end of a schism, dialectically opposed without consideration for alternative approaches? It is to these issues that I wish to turn in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Centripetal and centrifugal forces: moving boundaries

It has been argued that systems of school education differ fundamentally from those affecting the education of adults and are, therefore, more suitable for comparative purposes. In other words, in school education categories of description and analysis in relation to policies, the number of pupils attending, the curricula, administration, finance, modes of assessment, league tables or quality assurance processes are relatively clearly defined with readily available data in most countries, while the apparent absence of data and the diversity of activities in adult continuing education make any comparative attempts a difficult task from the onset. However, it is not too difficult to also argue that institutional boundaries have become increasingly blurred. Adults nowadays study not only in local community centres but also in further and higher education and in many other settings including those appropriate to open and distance learning. Furthermore, comparative studies in education also investigate areas outside school education. These include, among others, adult literacy, foreign languages, vocational education, multicultural education, formal and non-formal or higher education (see, for example, Thomas 1990, Watson 1985, Altbach 1998), all topics of interest to adult educators.

Nowadays too, the collection of data, hitherto considered to be an insuperable problem, has been made easier with the introduction of imposed record keeping and other forms of quality assurance which are linked to the allocation of resources in most institutions - all
of which refute the claim that systems in adult education are too complex to be compared. In the 1960s, on the other hand, quality assurance processes in the contemporary sense did not exist. Institutions were less accountable and records collected at random. Yet, as outlined in the previous chapter, adult education, and with it comparative adult education, was defined mainly in terms of institutions and systems. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to assume that those conducting comparative studies then were influenced by notions of systems theories, functionalism and structuralism which dominated academic debates in the social sciences at the time. General systems theory delineates rules that govern behaviours of a variety of living and non-living entities. These rules can be conceptualised as systems with various interacting components. Laws could theoretically be formulated to describe how the system functioned. In these terms, the system of education, for example, could be described as a whole system with many components or subsystems. This would allow scholars to make sense of the system’s characteristics such as wholeness, differentiation, order, progression and components. The concern for the whole was also central to theories of functionalism from perspective of social practices which are beneficial to the equilibrium or integration of the social system in which these practices are embedded. For the functionalist, the answer is that societies have built-in tendencies towards harmony and self-regulation, analogous to biological organisms or machines (Bilton et.al.1993: 20). Functionalism reconstructs notions of rationality and prerequisites. The argument is often made that these prerequisites need to be fulfilled for a given society to survive, or that the society tends to operate in such a way that these needs tend to be fulfilled (Baert 1998: 37-38).
Both functionalism and structuralism support a holistic picture of society in which the interrelationship of sub-systems and practices is central. Both assume that the task of social scientists is to unravel a deeper reality behind the level of purposive action. The viewing of society, systems and organisations as a whole, however, implies an acceptance of the status quo or the equilibrium which in its boundedness is not likely to change. As Jarvis (1985:8) points out, functionalism is inherently conservative in nature. Cowen (1996: 159) argues that, overall, the modern educational system is characterised by a balancing of tension – a series of policy judgements – about conflicting demands for a national identity, the general contribution which educational systems can make to economic growth and to delivering post-war educational aspirations of educational opportunity. These agenda, he concedes, are rapidly coming to an end. The construction of late-modern educational systems begins with the gradual recognition of a crisis. “That crisis has a number of common sense constituents such as the oil crisis, the rapid growth of the economic power of several countries around the Pacific rim and the emergence of major trading block which resulted in educational reform movements in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA and UK (Cowen 1996: 159). As Salter and Tapper (1981: 6) state, “no institution is an island and education is no exception. Indeed, it is frequently argued that formal education is the convenient expression of underlying economic and social need with political institutions merely serving to interpret and specify the precise form that expression should take.”

Giddens (1990: 14) refers to the ‘problem of order’ which is central to the interpretation of boundedness of social systems, because it is defined as a question of integration, of
holding the system together in the face of divisions of interests which would set all
against all. Modern societies or nation states in some respects anyway have clearly
deﬁned boundaries. But all such societies are also interwoven with ties and connections
which crosscut the sociopolitical system of the state and the cultural order of the ‘nation’.
It is not useful to think this way, Giddens argues that rather to think of social systems that
are bound by time and space, “we should reformulate the question of order as a problem
of how it comes about that social systems ‘bind’ time and space.” The problem of order is
seen here as one of time-space distanciation – the conditions under which time and space
are organised to connect the presence and the absence. This issue has to be conceptually
distinguished from ‘boundedness’ of social systems. “We have to account for the extreme
dynamism and globalising scope of modern institutions and explain the nature of their
discontinuities from traditional cultures” (Giddens 1990: 16). It is not diﬃcult to see how
these debates transfer to those in comparative education or comparative adult education
where theoretical considerations are based on concepts of systems theory and social
boundedness rather than on Gidden’s concept of time-space distanciation – hence the
diﬃculties in deﬁning tasks for comparative adult education where static concepts of the
nation state and nationhood, national identity and national characteristics are still part of
the comparativist’s discourse.

Concepts of nationhood

For the time being national boundaries exist. In every day life, we perceive people
from other countries as being diﬀerent, we still refer to ‘foreigners’ and to ‘going
abroad' not only in a negative but also in an enriching sense. We are proud of national achievements, be they in area of sport, the arts or entertainment. We still sing the national anthem. Yet concepts of anything ‘national’ are elusive. They constantly change, adapt, and mutate to given spatial and temporal circumstances. Schulze (1994:113) refers to the Latin meaning of the words natio and nationes and the Roman Empire which indicate differentiation between Roman citizens and other less civilised groups of people, akin to the English meaning of ‘natives’. He continues to account that in the context of Germany sentiments of a homogenous nation were meaningless until the beginning of the eighteenth century and the German rebellion against French hegemony and cultural domination. Until then and from early Middle Ages allegiance to the Heiliges Römisches Reich (Holy Roman Empire) or since 1512 the Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation (Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation) was a matter of concern for the nobility rather than the masses who served their nobility within regional states only (Schulze 1994:127).

Important too, in this context, is the notion of the Standesstaat as a system of political rule which was widespread in Europe by the thirteenth century and is characterised by a “more pronounced patrimonial influence than in the predominantly feudal order found in England” (King 1986:38). The Standesstaat was based on notions of justice and legal definitions of law with the king and estates in a partnership between two relatively autonomous centres of power. The Standesstaat proved to be an enduring system of rule, particularly in the German
states, the Netherlands and Sweden. It also marked the resurgence of the influence of the towns which, in quite a novel manner, became areas of independent and collective political action. The result was a significant step towards the development of the modern nation state and hence collective national identity. In Britain, on the other hand, crown, nation and religion together with a national language as expressed in the *Common Prayer Book* (1548) and the two *Acts of Uniformity* (1549, 1552) together with its island location shaped a sense of national identity and cohesiveness much earlier than in most other European countries. In a historical sense the concept of 'nation' has gained significance, not least because of a common language, culture and history and its concrete manifestation as a particular way of life. The archetypal historical moment of nation state formation was the period following the French Revolution in Europe when the sovereign, territorially bounded state based on absolutistic and monarchical rule, gave way to the modern nation state, legitimated by the people or the nation (Green 1997: 131). In defence of the nation state Kant in his reflections on *Perpetual Peace* (1795) put forward the following sentiments:

For a state is not a property (patrimonium) as may be the ground in which its people are settled. It is a society of human beings over whom no one but itself has the right to rule and to dispose. Like the trunk of a tree, it has its own roots, and to graft it on to another state is to do away with its existence. ([1795]1972: 109).

Hermand (in Hermand, Steakley 1996: 5) refers to the historical context of the eighteenth century. He argues that words such as nationalism or patriotism are
evidently not about a ‘concept’ with a content to some extent definable, nor is it about a ‘movement’, with a centre or margins, wings and divisions. Rather, it is about something much less definite, about a kind of experimental play with words, concepts, feelings, and images, which in turn encompass a relatively wide breadth of meaning, but which constitute a relatively narrow nucleus of emotions. Fichte’s famous address to the ‘Nation’ (1808) comes to mind. He articulates both confidence and despair in its positioning as a political fiction: the ‘German’ nation. Fichte, mainly in reaction against French hegemony, appeals to German patriotism and nationalistic sentiments:

Just as it is true beyond doubt that, wherever a separate language is found, there a separate nation exists, which has the right to take independent charge of its affairs and to govern itself, so one can say, on the other hand, that where a people has ceased to govern itself, it is equally bound to give up its language and to coalesce with its conquerors, in order that there may be unity and internal peace and complete oblivion of relationships which no longer exist. (Fichte [1808]1968:184).

By contrast, Heller (in Nelson et al. 1992:3) describes how in Europe the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterised by emerging diversification and differentiation. Instead of a single Christianity, there were many Christian religions. Nation states began to emerge. National and religious wars decimated and divided the European continent. Experiments with alternative economic policies and political institutions were launched. She refers to the emerging pluralism, diversity of experiences and lifestyles as having produced a sufficient variety of forms which consequently triggered "that unique venture called modernity" without a specific
European cultural identity, albeit for a brief period during the nineteenth century, from the Napoleonic wars to the outbreak of World War One and the rise of totalitarian systems of the twentieth century. "Together with modernity, Europe created history of a kind that does not allow its self-created cultural tradition to be disseminated together with its real identity: modernity. Indeed, European culture seems to be the shortest-lived of all cultures in recorded human history" (Heller in Nelson et al. 1992:16).

Nowadays, the term 'nation state' is widely used in the classical nineteenth-century sense of sovereign or citizen states, even where these include a diversity of 'nations' or 'peoples'. Habermas (1996: 130) defines the concept of state in its modern meaning as legally defined, externally and internally linked to sovereignty, spatially to defined territory and socially to the dependants of that state. Modern nation states, according to Gibbs (in King 1986: 47), do not simply reflect nationalistic aspirations or dominant economic interests, but they are primarily organisations which secure internal control or a particular space and its people, and potentially or actually engage in warfare with other states in an international system. Interpretations of the development of the modern state are linked to Durkheim and the division of labour, Marx, Engels and Lenin, together with Weber's conceptions of bureaucracy and the state, dimensions of corporatism and power - or in the sense of German Hegelianism, to its concern for the spiritual life and the state as a basis of community and altruistic commitment (page 55). It is worth noting that in American and British experience the idea or concept of the state lacks the precision and significance attached to continental Europe. The view of the composite and
pluralistic character of public authority, the separation and balance of different powers and interests, found in the 'stateless' English-speaking societies contrast strongly with that of the integrated 'public power' of continental Europe which is often defended in highly abstract terms (King 1986: 31). Yet the dominant position of the nation state has been called into question and it has even been suggested that the future spatio-economic organisation of the world will be based around city regions or city states (Cochrane, Jonas 1999: 145). Others refer to the impact of international migration. Joppke (1998: 5-6) states that, whereas traditional empires were alone in the world, shielded by border zones beyond which communication was haphazard and erratic, the modern state system has made the world one and with it immigration as a permanent, structural option. States, he argues, have intentionally created migration flows, as labour-recruiting in the past colonial and more recent guestworker eras. Conversely, most of today's migration of refugees and asylum-seekers stems from the turbulence of national state building on the south-eastern periphery of the modern state system. There seems to be no significant migration episode, past or present, in which states have not had an active, rather than a reactive, hand.

A union of nations

Nowadays, Europe-wide interaction highlights tensions between what is often described in terms of opposites, that is, the local and global, homogeneity and heterogeneity or, in the words of Robertson, universality and particularity, even the
interpretation of either (in King 1991:73). The interpretation of anything European, however, remains full of contradictions and dichotomies. The term Europe itself is used in a vague sense and its meaning is negotiable, depending on the context in which the term is deployed. Europe, on the one hand, can denote continental Europe, on the other it can refer to Western Europe or to the European Union only.

Europe, therefore, is not just a geographical concept covering a well delineated territory or politically or legally binding construct but it is an imagined space identified by a common history, pattern of social, economic and political interaction and values and cultural identities (Husén, Tuijnman, Halls 1992: 164). Geographically, and according to decisions of modern science, Europe is bound in the South by the Mediterranean, in the West by the Atlantic Ocean which includes the Azores and Iceland. Its eastern boundaries are extremely vague, with some countries partly in and partly out of it (Coulby and Jones 1996: 175).

Within the context of the European Union Churchill’s speech at the Zurich University in 1946 is regarded as having profoundly influenced the shape of post-war Europe when he said:

I wish to speak to you today about the tragedy of Europe. This noble continent, comprising on the whole the fairest and the most cultivated regions of the earth, enjoying a temperate and equable climate, is home of all the great races of the western world. It is the fountain of Christian faith and Christian ethics. It is the origin of most of the culture, arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times. If Europe were once united in the sharing of its common inheritance, there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and glory, which its three
or four hundred million people would enjoy (Churchill 1946 cited in Nelsen and Stubb 1998: 7).

Churchill’s refrain, common to all integrationists at the time, was that Europe must unite before war destroys the continent and its glorious civilisation. Nowadays, comparative political theorists puzzle over questions such as is the Community governed by intergovernmental or supranational modes of decision-making. Here theoretical discussions centre around the early integration theories, which explain the process of unifying separate states, and the main features of neofunctionalism, particularly influential during the 1960s and 1970s, which viewed the integration process as group driven, where federal institutions are established because important political groups see tangible benefits from joint governance in specific areas, and liberal intergovernmentalism of the early 1990s. The latter includes investigations into domestic policies and guarded national sovereignty (Nelsen and Stubb 1998). Yet others see the European integration as a dynamic process that yields divergent outcomes (Sandholtz, Stone and Sweet 1998: 7).

Gabel (1998: 465) refers to consociational political theory in this context. He argues that the integration of Europe can be perceived as remarkable, not only because of its concern for individuals in member countries, but also because it created, sustained and expanded supranational political authority without the means of enforcement, that is, there is no European army or police which can enforce laws. Instead the stability of the EU’s political authority depends on voluntary compliance of national governing institutions
such as agencies, courts, police and, above all, people – just as, according to consociational political theory, political institutions are necessary to maintain stable democratic governance in culturally diverse societies. Stability is achieved, it can be argued, precisely because each member state of the EU has well developed and largely exclusive educational, political and associational institutions, a distinct language and symbols and traditions - often derived from historic conflict with the other EU member states - which maintain independent identity of EU member-states and who retain considerable autonomy in areas of national and cultural importance. EU citizens, for example, express almost exclusively national rather than transnational partisanship during European elections.

Giddens (1998: 142) strikes a positive note by stating that the European Union is important for its political role, because in this respect it is ahead of the rest of the world. In his view, it is pioneering forms of governance that do not fit the traditional mould. Member countries of the EU have a strong motivation to behave like cosmopolitan nations outside as well as within the European context. Schleicher (1993: 2) refers to a Europe which is not homogenous nor a fiction of one European state and does not boast one common cultural heritage but to a Europe which is growing together by developing a transnational discourse of its own. Schulze (1994:341), however, evokes different dimensions by saying that Europeans will always place their national identities above their European one; "Wie man den Wald vor Bäumen nicht sieht, nehmen die Europäer ihren Kontinent vor lauter Nationen nicht wahr" (Just as one cannot see the wood for the trees, the European cannot see their continent for the numerous nations). He points to
a history of a thousand years during which Europeans got used to their states and nations, which have experienced continuous change, and says that very gradually these will fade away to make room for a nation of Europe of whose shape we are yet barely aware. Thus the politics of the European Community have not led toward more integration and supranationality. For the time being Europe remains a halfway house between integration and disintegration. It is the prototypical phenomenon of a system of states in transition (Hacke in Nelson et al. 1992: 67)

Within the European Union then there is to be a flowering of cultures, respect for diversity and, at the same time, a striving for an acceptance of a common cultural heritage. Yet concepts of a shared common cultural heritage remain elusive and difficult to grasp, let alone usable as an instrument for learning in the intended spirit of the Treaty on European Union which states:

The Community shall contribute to the flowering of cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing about the common cultural heritage to force. (CEC: Article 128).

The richness and diversity of European cultures at local, regional and national level, however, pose their own barriers, tension and challenges. The diversity of European languages offers a good example. German is the most widely spoken language. It spoken by one in four people or 25 per cent of the population. The second most frequently cited mother tongues are French, Italian and English with 16 per cent. Spanish is spoken by 9
per cent as a mother tongue and Dutch by 6 per cent while the remaining European languages do not exceed 5 per cent. One in three EU citizens, on the other hand, speak English sufficiently well to take part in conversations though if mother tongue speakers are included this figure rises to one in two (Eurobarometer 44, 1996). Altogether there are almost 50 indigenous languages spoken throughout the European Union. Minority languages, state-supported or not, are found in almost all EU member states and though they are not the official languages of the country in which they are spoken, they have been spoken as autochthonous languages for thousands of years and form an integral part of Europe’s cultural and linguistic heritage. Several languages for example are spoken in Spain, all of which give rise to pronounced regional consciousness, feelings of ‘otherness’ and national and regional identity. Aragonese is spoken in a few Pyrenean valleys though it is estimated that about 30,000 people are able to speak and understand the language, and Asturian by about 450,000 in Asturias. Catalan, the official language spoken by 95 per cent of Catalonia. Basque, on the other hand, notes 565,000 mother tongue speakers and Galician over 2.5 million people in addition to about 60,000 people who speak variations of Occitan. Germany, too, offers linguistic diversity. Danish is spoken by about 50,000 people, Frisian by about 8,000. There are about 70,000 Roma and Sinti in Germany with German citizenship who speak Romany and about 2,000 speakers of Sater Frisian spoken only in the north-west corner of Lower Saxony. About 60,000 Sorbs live in Saxony and Brandenburg with a language and cultural tradition of their own. Other EU member countries, including the UK, have rich cultural traditions, some of which are supported by central government. For example, there are over 500,000 Welsh speakers and about 142,000 people claim to have knowledge of Irish in Northern
Ireland. There are about 67,000 speakers of Gaelic but only a few still speak Cornish fluently though a few thousand people claim to have some knowledge of the language (European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages 1998).

However, the onslaught of the English language world-wide seems unstoppable. The English language has in the minds of many people become the world language by virtue of the political and economic progress made by the English-speaking nations in the past 200 years, and it is likely to remain so, gradually consolidating its position across the world. It is estimated that 350 million people have English as a mother tongue and a further 400 million use it as a second language in such countries as Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Pakistan and the Philippines. It has official status in over 60 countries. Estimates also suggest that at least 150 million people use English fluently as a foreign language and three or four times that number have some degree of competence (Crystal 1994: 121). This figures are estimated to be on the conservative side. Already 75 per cent of the world’s mail and 70 per cent of electronic mail sent on the Internet is written in English. The world’s stock markets, international banks, and most transnational companies conduct their affairs and transaction in English (Watson1999b: 9). Paradoxically, as the English language expands as an international and intranational language and while it is the language of the Internet, 90 per cent of the world’s languages will either be extinct or doomed to extinction by the end of the next century. A language – or rather its last remaining speaker – dies every two weeks. Graddol (1998:10) considers that this language loss
is closely associated with a loss of cultural diversity, together with a loss of small communities and their specialised knowledge and social practices.

Admittedly even linguists have difficulties in clarifying what constitutes a language as opposed to a dialect. Furthermore, languages as well as dialects convey not only geographical information but also social information about their speakers. The notion of a dialect refers to a distinctive grammar and vocabulary range and possibly pronunciation - while reference to a regional accent refers only to pronunciation. Crystal (1987: 24) explains differences between dialects the following way: “Probably no two people are identical in the way they use language or react to the usage of others. Minor differences in phonology, grammar and vocabulary are normal, so that every one has, to a limited extent, a ‘personal dialect’.” The most common problem relates to mutual intelligibility. In other words dialects belonging to the same language are not always mutually intelligible in their spoken form. Other problems of definition occur where dialects are spoken throughout an area. For example, speakers in northern Germany cannot understand those in eastern Switzerland though both speak a form of the German language. The decision, therefore, about what constitutes the name of a language is made on grounds of history and politics in relation to national boundaries.

Williams (1991:2) argues that Western intellectuals were too quick to relegate non-state languages to the domain of history, for despite the obvious appeals of supra-state economic and political integration, as represented in the development of the European Community, for example, declining linguistic minorities have refused to lie down and
pass out of existence. It is debatable, according to Williams, whether or not the
development of a supra-state and global appreciation of our common problems has
actually quickened or arrested the decline of minority cultures in the West. There is
ample and conflicting evidence for both viewpoints. What is not in conflict, however, is
that the situation of the linguistic groups such as the Basques, the Welsh or the Catalans
has improved out of all recognition since the granting of fundamental concessions by
their dominant state majorities. The passing of the Welsh Language Act in 1995 and the
support the Welsh language has been given in social, economic and educational terms,
sustains the view that languages are a useful instrument used for political purposes within
modern, or indeed post-modern societies. "Questions about power, control, legitimacy,
adequate employment, demography and planning are as central to the future of lesser-
used language communities as are the more conventional elements of education, literature
and communal values and behaviour" (Williams 1991:3).

Clyne (1995:4) in a similar context, points out that in Europe the language situation is
driven by two seemingly contradictory tendencies in terms of 'massification' and
diversification, both of which are operating simultaneously. Examples of massification
are open economic borders between member states and the homogenising effect of the
English language coupled with Anglo-American culture not only in Europe but also
across the globe. On the other hand, diversification is exemplified in the resurgence of
regions in Western Europe and the re-emergence of smaller, largely language-based,
nation states in Central and Eastern Europe which replaced the multinational political
tentities such as Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the USSR. Another aspect of
diversification is the legal strengthening of regional and ethnic minority languages through the passing of the Charter of Regional and Minority Languages by the Council of Europe member states in 1993. This affords ethnic minorities and regional groups (but not migrant workers) the right that their language be used in administration, education, the media, care of the aged, and communications across national boundaries.

However, in Europe there are also the languages spoken by migrants to the Community. London, for example, was recently described as the most multilingual capital of the world with representations of between 250 and 300 languages. Not surprisingly, its citizens come from many different former colonies but there are numerous other languages represented from all parts of the world including continental Europe (The Independent, March 29, 1999). Extra and Verhoeven (1993:4) point out that as a consequence of socio-economically or politically determined processes of immigration, the traditional pattern of language variation across Europe have been considerably extended over the past decades. Many industrialised countries of Europe show evidence of a growing number of immigrant populations, which differ widely, both from a linguistic and cultural point of view. The largest migrant populations are noted in France and Germany, 8 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. For various reasons, though, reliable demographic information about immigrant groups in Western and Northern Europe is difficult to obtain. Not all countries collect data or update available information. Some count only foreigners, that is those who are not passport holders of that country, while many ethnic minorities or residents from former colonies often have the nationality of their country of immigration and hence are not included in official data (Extra and Verhoeven 1993:6). As Coulby and
Jones (1996: 77) confirm, post-modern reading of realities of citizenship in Europe points towards the acceptance of plural cultural identities. After all, a European can be White, Black, Christian, Muslim or Jewish and have other legitimate identities, too, such as being at the same time African and European or Indian and European or Turkish, even Vietnamese and European.

In Europe the identification with the EU appears to be increasing, on the other hand, more than seven out of ten EU citizens (63%) are proud of their own country and nationality. Extremely proud of their nationality are the Irish (92 per cent), the Greeks (91 per cent) and Portuguese (90 per cent) and the British (81%). Predictably, the Germans are an exceptional case: here only 45 per cent are proud of their national identity, however, 35 per cent explicitly state that they are not proud to be German (Eurobarometer 42, 1995).

The concept of identity, be it national, regional or local is ambiguous, multi-layered and multidimensional. It relates to an abstract construct coherent to the individual on the one hand and, on the other, to the emotional need to adhere to collective values and belief systems. It is questionable, therefore, to what extent such surveys offer new insights, suffice it to say, that the adherence to national identities matters in individual and collective terms (see chapter 6). Identity with local regions in the UK has gained recent momentum with the newly created Scottish and Welsh parliaments. However, regional identity has also been particularly marked in Germany with its history of Kleinstaaterei. Quite fundamental differences in language variation, attitudes and behaviour, climate and social life can be found between, for example, Bavaria and the coastal regions of Schleswig-Holstein, the region around Leipzig or lake Constance just as Wales differs
from Scotland, England or Northern Ireland. Regional identity, then, can be seen as akin
to a symbolic construct or group coherence, often as an alternative to the dominant factor
such as the national state, another bordering region and so on. Ipsen (in Lindner
1994:232) considers regional identity not linked to a naive idea of belonging to a locality,
but as a product of opposition to national and international identity, which can provoke
many different reactions. Regional identity, therefore, can be regarded as something
positive, for example, the promotion of regional activities. As a political concept, on the
other hand, regionalism is, according to Ipsen, a very ambiguous concept. The German
notion of Heimat (native land, home land, home) is perhaps apt in this context though the
word itself is difficult to translate into other languages. Heimat is a spatial concept linked
to locality. It is a concept of an inner construct, often linked to landscapes and as such
offers security and a sense of belonging. To most Germans Heimat is not really a regional
concept in the local administrative sense but an emotional, symbiotic one, one which can
both can include as well as exclude. In its strictest sense, the notion of Heimat, however,
does not allow permutations and plurality and city worldliness, which delineate cultural
differences. Furthermore, increasingly, in transient and mobile societies, there are people
who live in regions, perhaps temporarily, but do not necessarily identify with that locality
or perhaps only to a limited extent. Althaus and Mog (1992) describe German attitudes
towards the public and the private, the inner and outer space and the assumed German
need for Lebensraum (space for living) with examples taken from history and literature,
which, they maintain, can be linked to the Industrial Revolution and in particular to
German laws of inheritance and the partitioning of farm land to all members of the family
in the event of death which inevitably led to increased poverty and the need to find
additional land for survival purposes. Certainly, German sense of longing for *Natur* (nature) and to other worlds on the one hand and fixed possessions on the other is frequently referred to in comparative literature, which, more flippantly, might explain German territorial claims on Spanish beaches.

Linguistic and cultural identities then have their own centrifugal and centripetal forces which cross numerous national boundaries. Past experience influences meaning which in turn affect subsequent meaning, and so on. Interpretation of meaning, however, remains an isolated process if not shared and enriched by others. Hall (in Hall et al., 1992: 275) states that theoretical concepts around cultural identity range from those of the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the post-modern subject. The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, while the notion of the sociological subject reflects the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not, after all, autonomous and self-sufficient. The post-modern subject, on the other hand, has no fixed, essential, or permanent identity. Identity becomes movable, formed and transformed continuously in the relation to the ways we are presented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround is. It is historically, not biologically defined.

**National characteristics**
While it may seem difficult to maintain that individuals are perhaps typically German or English given the cultural complexities outlined above, the notion that different countries have distinct cultures and characteristics is still widely accepted in education, industry and commerce and society as a whole. At superficial level, these notions seem out of date and inappropriate in the context of contemporary multicultural societies. They were at one time, however, key issues, in comparative education. Mallison (1975: 12) defines national characteristics as a common identity. He refers to that common purpose which has led over the centuries to the establishment of a fixed mental constitution. It covers, he states, the accumulated knowledge of a people about its past, the virtues which have constituted its strengths throughout history, its religious beliefs and practices, its ethical and moral values, its possibilities and the use to which these can be best used. Though Mallison, unlike Hans ([1949]1982), refutes racial characteristics, he, nevertheless, confuses characteristics with stereotyping. For example, he finds the French less stolid and phlegmatic than the Belgians, and the Germans thorough and cruel, all of which are simplistic and unjustified sentiments no longer acceptable to contemporary academic discourse. Halls (1990: 31) takes up issues of national characteristics and national style, which he sees as the pattern of performance which civilisation shows in coping with paramount issues of its time. He refers to Mallison as one of the leading exponents of these debates, though others, he maintains, find discussions on national characteristics too amorphous. He points to French intellectualism and its common traits to a number of Latin countries with their origins in antiquity and Catholic theology. The issue of national style in relation to philosophy, for example,
is discussed by Lauwery (in Bennett, Kidd, Kulich 1975). He points out that Plato and Kant are not only appreciated by the Germans: their appeal is to all mankind. There is a sense in which one speaks of German idealism and romanticism, French rationalism, British empiricism or American pragmatism.

Hofstede (1980: 16; 1991: 5-6), whose research in the context of work-related values is widely cited, takes a more straightforward stance. He regards concepts of national culture as forms of ‘collective programming of the mind’ which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Culture, he argues, is learnt not inherited. Furthermore, Hofstede proposes that human nature is the universal level in one’s mental software. It is inherited with one’s genes, it is an operating system, of which part is shared with the animal world. He thus links personality to the individual – and to the collective national, regional and ethnic culture as well as gender, social class and organisational culture in the work context. His survey addresses issues around how frequently employees were afraid to express disagreement with their managers and subordinates’ preferences about bosses’s decision making styles. Hofstede bases his exploration of differences in thinking and social action between 40 different nations and a wide range of occupations in a multi-national company (later increased to 50). He eventually placed his findings into four, largely independent sets of values:

1. Power Distance (unequal versus equal)
2. Uncertainty Avoidance (rigid versus flexible)
3. Individualism/Collectivism (alone versus together)
4. Masculinity/Femininity (tough versus tender)

These values were attributed to various countries. For example, those sampled in Britain and Germany shared equally low positions in Power Distance Indices which are based on questions of colleagues' fears to disagree with their superiors; Germans score very much higher than their British counterparts in 'uncertainty avoidance' with their need for security and dependence while the British rate 'individualism' higher than the Germans (Hofstede 1980: 315). Hofstede further investigated 'masculinity' versus 'femininity' as national characteristics with men stressing ego goals more than women who stress social goals. Here both Great Britain and Germany scored relatively high rates for 'masculinity', higher than France or Spain, for example, but less high than Japan, Austria or Switzerland, while Sweden, Norway and other Nordic countries scored very high in 'femininity'. Hofstede and his associates (1998:42) determine that expressions of 'masculinity' in organisational life include, for example, job-centredness, emphasis on visible achievements, competition, decisiveness and efficiency while expressions of 'femininity' include employee-centredness, centrality of personal and family life, emphasis on human relationships, empathy and consensus. They argue that it makes a big difference if organisational life is largely guided by notions of performance, competition, or quality of work life, cooperation and solidarity. These four dimensions are not necessarily exhaustive, according to Hofstede (1980:313), they do not represent the final word on dimensions of national culture.
Laurent (1983:75-96), again in the context of management behaviour in organisations, investigated national differences in the perception of what management should be in nine European countries and the United States. National culture, he argues, seems to act as a strong determinant of managerial ideology. He found the Germans to be less hierarchy conscious than the British, for example. On the other hand, more Germans, in common with Belgians, French and Italians, thought that it was important for a manager to have at hand precise answers to most questions that subordinates might raise than their Swedish, British, Dutch and American counterparts. Laurent finds that national variations in conceiving organisations as hierarchical relationship systems may affect the structuring of organisations in different countries and have implications for the transfer of organisational forms across cultures. These notions of national differences in management and organisations have been advocated in the cultural training of managers in many different settings and to varying degrees of sophistication (Adler 1991, Mole 1992 Verluyton 1997, Spinks and Wells 1997 among others).

With reference to Hofstede, Clyne (1994:31), however, challenges the notion of a single national culture, which though useful at times, is also open to question as recent events have shown. He refers to the difficulties which have arisen from German unification and which demonstrate a much more pronounced sense of ‘collectivity’ and ‘uncertainty avoidance’ in the former East Germany rather than in West Germany. The recent playing down of nation states in Western Europe and general political changes in Europe show that national boundaries are not an
altogether suitable basis for describing cultural variations. Other factors such as
class, gender, age interrelate with parameters such as individualism and collectivity,
for example. Indeed, any form of typology becomes increasingly complex as
boundaries disappear or remerge in different modes. These challenge our perception
and understanding of long adhered to ways of seeing the world.

The complexity of a multitude of sovereign units affects individuals, too. As individuals,
however, we are free to choose - though, conversely, not all our choices are determined
by different cultural traditions arising out their own spatial and temporal settings. Halman
(1996: 198), having studied European Values in 1981 and 1990, challenges notions of
national characteristics. Instead, Halman relates his findings to Christianity and the
North-South divide on the basic values in the pre-modern order, which were primarily
legitimised by traditional and institutional religion, whereas in the modern and post­
modern affluent order these values have become subject to individual freedom and
personal autonomy. Yet modern people, he argues, do not consistently opt for
individualistic choices. Individualism appears to be domain specific and above all there
appear to be a marked cross-cultural variation in individualism. Halman's survey
highlights changes in religious involvement in a number of European countries and cross-
national differences between, amongst others, Britain, France, and the Netherlands, where
church participation is markedly lower than, for example, in the Irish Republic, Northern
Ireland and the Southern European countries, and the traditions of protestantism in
Nordic countries, where being a church member is almost a citizen's duty rather than a
sign of deeply felt personal beliefs. Such differences seem to reflect differences in
historical, economic, cultural and political circumstances. People often think collectively and prefer the traditional alternatives. Hence, individualism in cross-cultural terms appears to be multi-faceted and not a one-dimensional phenomenon. There are, however, other factors, not just religious ones, which determine attitudes towards collectivity and individualism. Recent changes in East Germany offer a good example.

**Processes of individualisation**

A multitude of comparative questions in relation to the push-me pull-me effect of homogeneity and heterogeneity occupied my mind when I as an Anglo-West German visited Leipzig in East Germany for the first time. Here rapidly increasing individualisation coupled with marked changes in social structures and interactions are not simply abstract notions. They have a powerful and, at times, highly coercive, reality. Leipzig’s magnificent Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station, the largest terminus in Europe, illustrates my point. The station was built between 1902 and 1915, extensively rebuilt and modernised after unification and finally re-opened in 1997. Nowadays the station accommodates two malls with 140 shops, which largely offer, instead of local produce, a range of predictable goods obtainable almost anywhere in the Western world. My taxi driver, however, complained bitterly that the shops inside the station did not help reduce Leipzig’s massive unemployment and that shop prices were affordable to only a very few. Rapid, market-driven globalisation is not always welcome, it seems.
No one could have foreseen that the opening of the Hungarian border in the summer of 1989 would prompt a chain of events, which not only led to the unification of both Germanys, but also, in the end, to the collapse of the Sovjet Union and the East-West conflict which had dominated the political landscape since 1917. What was stimulated by West German television, increasingly watched in the East, and began as a peaceful revolution with the demands of Wir sind das Volk (we are the people) and subsequently Wir sind ein Volk (we are a people) promised to be an utopian end of politics. However, it provoked the Ausbruch des Politischen (the emergence of the political) away from national to international or economic globalisation; in other words, global politicisation, which enables international commercial and industrial organisations to initiate and control political actions outside and independent of national boundaries, and which, in the end, undermine domestic political processes embedded in a democratic welfare state (Beck 1997: 13).

The Wende (literally the turning point, referring to the period between 1989 and 1990) and unification left deeply-felt personal marks on those involved in the process of which I became increasingly aware when staying at the Friedrich-Schiller university in Jena with Open University students attending the annual Summer School. Here almost all East German academics had been emotionally and circumstantially affected by the unification, many of whom had lost their former positions and status. As Wolff (1998: 46) confirms, the new and once genuinely East German elite was partially replaced by West German actors at most levels and in most sectors of society. Added to this is the sense of soziale Deklassierung (a lowering of social status) together with the often uncomfortable
experiences East Germans claim to have with West Germans, who have taken over many of the key positions in the private and public sector, particularly in the army, judiciary, radio and television as well as in education (Kaiser in Hettlage and Lenz 1995: 176-177).

Modernisation, as it occurs in all East-European countries, involves more than just structural changes. German writers, according to Biechele (1994), refer to an 'outer and inner unity' between the two parts of Germany, claiming that while the former has been achieved, more or less, the latter, that is 'inner unity', or full social integration has not yet taken place.

Events in West and East Germany, before and after 1990, have given rise to a multitude of comparative statistics and research studies (see for example, Anweiler and Mitter 1990, Hettlage and Lenz 1995). These cover numerous aspect of industrial relations, the study of German society and social issues: for example, the training of East German officials in the administration of local government in the newly established Länder (federal states); the implementation of legal processes and changes to the judiciary (there were only about 600 solicitors in the former GDR compared to 13,000 in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia at the same point in time); the training of police officers, and replacements in staffing terms of many of the former East German elite with West Germans in key positions, including those in education (Hettlage 1995, pp 22-67). Other changes refer to attitudes towards family life and work in light of continuing high unemployment in the East, -14.6 per cent in 1992 and 18.1 per cent in 1997 compared to 6.6 per cent in 1992 and 9.8 per cent in 1997 in the West (Statistisches Bundesamt für Arbeit: October 1998). While in 1990, the year of unification, 38 per cent of East
Germans considered family life to be more important than the job (27 per cent), income (15 per cent) or leisure time (13 per cent), within two years family life was relegated to third place (26 per cent) behind the job (35 per cent) and income (27 per cent). In 1990, “a harmonious family life with children” was considered to be particularly important by 42 per cent of East Germans. By 1992 only 11 per cent thought likewise, all indicators of processes towards individualisation which are currently taking place in almost all spheres of life in the wake of hitherto inexperienced unemployment (Kaiser in Hettlage and Lenz 1995:176-177). Beck (1992: 130) with reference to Germany and the last two decades in particular, states that

an essential peculiarity of individualisation lies in its consequences. It is no longer compensated for by any conscience collective or by a social reference unit in the sphere of cultural life. To put it very schematically, it is no longer social classes that take the place of status groups, or the family as a stable frame of reference that take the place of social class commitment. The individual himself or herself becomes the reproduction unit for the social in the lifeworld. Or put it another way, the family collapses as the 'penultimate' synthesis of life situations between the generations and the sexes, and the individuals inside and outside the family become agents of their livelihood mediated by the market, as well as of their biographical planning and organisation (Beck 1992: 130).

Beck (1992: 127) relates the homogenising global forces of standardisation to individualisation, institutionalisation and to individual life situations and biographical patterns. He argues that the general model of individualisation within the classical discussions of Weber, Durkheim and Simmel is supplemented by a second model and clarified beyond the previous discussions in relation to post-war conditions. With reference to advanced modernity he talks about a new model of societalization, a kind of
metamorphosis or categorical shift in relation to institutions, the individual and society. Beck uses the term *Freisetzung* (here: liberation), Freisetzung from restrictions of status-based classes which can be traced back to the beginning of the century, and from the situation of women, who are now able to support themselves. He sees the emergence of type of 'negotiated provisional family'. Families no longer start from the sphere of reproduction but as production. He refers to flexibilization of working hours and decentralisation of the work site (page 129). This differentiation of socio-biographical situations is accompanied at the same time by a high degree of standardisation (see also chapters 5, 7).

Beck sees liberated individuals becoming increasingly dependent on institutions, in the sphere of education, welfare state support, and possibilities and fashions in medical, psychological and pedagogical counselling and care. Entry to and exit from education systems, and entry to and exit from work, is part of the institutionalisation process. Individualisation also means dependency on mass markets and mass consumption, again manifestations of external control and standardisation. "This all points to the institution-dependent control structure of individual situations. Individualisation becomes the most advanced form of societalization dependent on the market, law, education and so on" (Beck 1992:131). Beck talks about the outside turned inside and made private of conditions and decisions made elsewhere, in the television networks, the educational system, in firms or on the labour market though economic and demographic 'ups and downs', too, can cause entire generations to drift into the margins of society. An increasing number of people, therefore, cannot enter the employment system. Through
institutional dependency, he argues, the individual in society simultaneously becomes vulnerable to all sorts of conflicts, commitments and coalitions across traditional class boundaries (page 134). At the same time individualisation means that each person's biography is removed from given determinations and placed in his or her own hands, open and dependent on decisions. "In the individualised society the individual must therefore learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive him or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on” (page 135).

Beck (1992: 130-131) then turns his attention to the resulting standardisation, which is beginning to be apparent in new Länder of Germany, where recent innovations and aspects of consumerism point to manifestations of increasingly global standardisation. He argues, that factors which bring about individualisation also bring about standardisation, affecting the market, money, law, mobility, education and so on, each in its own way. "This all points to the institution-dependent control structure of individual situations. Individualisation becomes the most advanced form of societalization dependent on the market, law, education and so on” (page 131). Beck develops his theories around what he terms the 'risk society'. Accordingly, in advanced modernity the social production of wealth is systematically accompanied by risks. "We are no longer concerned with making nature useful, or with releasing mankind from traditional constraints, but essentially with problems resulting from techno-economic developments itself. Hence modernisation becomes reflexive" (1992:19). It gathers its own momentum and becomes its own theme. Beck connects 'risk elements' around almost all aspects of modern life, from
environmental damage, to changing work patterns, industrial relations, to the functions of science, increased mobility, changing social patterns and individualisation. "Risks of modernisation sooner or later strike at those who produce or profit from them. They contain a boomerang effect, which breaks up the pattern of class and national society" (1992:23).

**Conclusion and further questions**

In this chapter I looked at the impact of globalisation in the context of a multilingual and multicultural Europe and how these developments challenge previously held notions of a monocultural and monolingual nation state, which are, after all relatively recent in terms of history. Instead, most communities experience a fusion of multilayered and interacting tensions between, for example, the past, present and future, or the global, national, regional, and local. These tensions are often expressed in the cultivation of minority languages, cultural and regional identity, though not necessarily terms of opposition but in terms of reaffirmation of traditional values within a national system.

These issues are important if our understanding of comparative adult education is to be redefined. It is clearly no longer valid to refer solely to national systems of comparative adult education which are embedded in holistic concepts within the boundedness of a status quo or societal equilibrium to be maintained. The provision of adult continuing education does not fit comfortably into clearly defined concepts of systems and structures which is why comparative studies have been so difficult to undertake. Instead, its strength
lies in its flexibility, fragmentation and diversity which, in theoretical terms, could imply a more comfortable relationship with contemporary, post-modern or late-modern concepts of education. There is no need to establish boundaries where none exist. After all, the phenomenon of lifelong learning can be cloaked in many different mantles. As such it crosses numerous boundaries irrespective of their national delineation. In comparative terms it may be well to argue that in recognising and accepting that tensions of homogeneity and heterogeneity are common to most countries, the researcher is free to concentrate on particulars or fragments rather than on overall summaries. As a provision the field of adult education has had to adapt to changes imposed on individuals in light of economic pressures, unemployment, rapid technological advances, and the need to adjust to different modes of working and learning. The European White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment (1994), and the White Paper Teaching and Learning: Towards a Learning Society (1995) and OECD Report Lifelong Learning for All (1996), point to challenges ahead.
Chapter 5

**Accommodating differences: challenges and responses**

When is the same really the same? When is the same really different? When is different really the same? When is different really different? (C. Osgood)

Much of the comparative research discourse rests on the evaluation of similarities and differences in terms of opposites, variables and equal weighting. We speak of similarities and differences between countries, languages, cultures and systems. As terms they are quantifiable, measurable, and hence static, limited, bounded as well as imprecise since the word ‘similar’ already contains notions of differentiation.

Conceptually the bi-polar constructs of similarities and differences do not allow permutations or volatility appropriate to the context of globalisation and postmodernity, nor, indeed, do they accommodate cultural subtleties and diversities with ease. Differences—within—similarities catches perhaps more current moods and perceptions. De-differentiation, a term used by Edwards (1997: 68), with reference to increasingly globalised conditions, is another way of describing the changes taking place, particularly in older industrialised countries.

References to postmodernity or late modernity, inspired by Foucault and Lyotard, do not allow for conventional distinctions and neat boundaries attached to previously held meanings, though Rose (1991:20) finds many of these terms to have already become outdated despite their wide distribution at this point in time. They do, however, affect current debates in education and hence comparative education.
Postmodernity, according to Usher and Edwards (1994: 1) is not really a system of ideas and concepts in the conventional sense, "rather it is complex and multiform and resists simplistic explanations and explications." The authors suggest that education is particularly resistant to the postmodern message - a point which seems apt in the context of comparison. By referring to the grand narrative of modernity, the Enlightenment's ideals of critical reasoning, individual reasoning, progress and benevolent change are substantiated and realised. The very rationale of the educational process and the role of the educator are founded in modernity. It is self-motivated, self-directed and rational, capable of exercising individual agency. On the other hand, postmodernity's emphasis on the inscribed subject, the decentred subject constructed by language, discourse, desire and the unconscious seems to contradict the very purpose of education and the basis of every educational activity (1996: 2).

It is tempting to accept Usher's and Edward's line of argumentation without further questioning. However, could one not equally determine that any form of education is shaped and influenced by educators and educational theorists who are at least affected by the discourse of postmodernity in relation to subject-centredness, tensions, language, desire and the subconscious? Usher and Edwards offer the following answer: the archetypal person of modernity also experiences a sense of discontinuity and fragmentation. In modernity there still an attempt to make sense of the socio-cultural space occupied. Modernity, they maintain, is characterised by a hermeneutic search for the underlying truth and certainty that can render the world, experiences and events (including the self and its experiences) coherent and meaningful. Postmodernity, on the other hand, "is marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multitude of sovereign units and
sites of authority, with no horizontal and vertical order, either in actuality or in potency” (Bauman 1992: 35 cited in Usher and Edwards 1994: 12).

Usher and Edwards develop their argument by stating that in postmodernity the decentering of knowledge is paralleled by the decentering of the subject. The unified subject of modern humanism as an assumed grounding for identity and action is reconceived as multiple subjectivity, and reconstituted through the acquisition of multiple meanings. In this sense comparative studies, precisely because of their epistemology, are constructs which fall into the realms of modernity. Such studies seek to make unifying sense out of experiences and knowledge gained so that those conclusions reached become coherent and meaningful. Nevertheless, ‘either/orisms’ rarely satisfy. In the contemporary world some boundaries become increasingly blurred, fragmented and itemised while others reassert themselves albeit in different forms and dimensions. Embedded in the attempts by the European Union to standardise and harmonise aspects of working and social life are such new boundaries. Quality assurance mechanisms and competency based accreditation frameworks set boundaries where none existed before. The attempts to harmonise vocational qualifications across Europe, in an effort to dismantle boundaries, attempted to create new ones. Conversely, adult educators increasingly exchange professional information via email or computer-mediated conferencing. They become partners in European projects and/or networking across numerous national boundaries. There are, however, tensions around culturally and historically determined conventions, practices and ways of viewing the world which appear to render such processes ineffective or, at least, only partially completed.
Standardisation and harmonisation

The impact of the European Union cannot be denied. As Field (1998: 87) states, what we are currently witnessing is both the product of specific policies and measures within the EU and also part of the wider internationalisation of education systems in advanced nations as they respond to and, in turn, help to create globalisation tendencies of modern societies. In modern societies, too, there is ample evidence of either market-driven and politically engineered standardisation in areas of education and training, particularly in the UK but also in most European countries and elsewhere - South Africa (Lugg in Walters 1997) for example, - where the allocation of resources is generally tied to quality assurance, benchmarking and evaluation mechanisms of pre-determined standards. The word standard, according to the 1995 Oxford English dictionary, refers to "an object or quality or measure serving as a basis or example or principle to which others conform or should conform or by which the accuracy or quality is judged." In other words, standards are achieved on the basis of agreed norms and values though the process of achieving these standards raises a minefield of questions. Whose standards affect whom or what? To what extent can standards be set or shared by a number of countries with very diverse systems?

The OECD (1996b) finds that the harmonisation of levels of competencies and academic achievements has contributed to the debate and helped promote, at least partially, integration processes in the European Union. It is the Council of Europe, however, rather than the European Union, which has been instrumental as an agent of change in the area of cultural understanding and foreign language teaching across all its 41 member countries. Its pro-active influence in the shaping of theoretical
perceptions, methodological approaches and harmonising levels of understanding in the professional context has enabled those in language teaching to develop a shared discourse and philosophy across numerous cultural and intellectual boundaries. In the early 1970s, Richterich (1977) and Trim (1980) and others involved in the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project, for example, pioneered a learner-centred approach for all those involved in teaching foreign/second languages on a Europe-wide basis. Their seminal approach, which broke the mould of all preceding mainly behaviourists approaches, stunned the language teaching profession at the time. The credit system for different levels of achievement applicable to a number of European languages essentially centres on adults and adult motivation and needs for foreign language learning. It is no exaggeration to claim that the facilitation of such a credit system has shaped foreign language pedagogies first in adult education and thereafter in initial and higher education ever since.

However, these homogenising tendencies towards standardisation cannot be seen in the European context only. They are evident in most countries in the Western world - though their speed and intensity will vary according to local circumstances and needs. It is the ambivalence of these processes, on the one hand, and their complexity, on the other which defies oversimplification and predictability. The plurality, variety, and heterogeneity encountered in almost all countries, regions and communities, therefore challenges and impedes statements around meaning and acceptance of standards and differences in a common sense fashion. Beck's (1992:134) references to the increasing dependency of individuals on institutions can also be related to the European context. This dependency inevitably implies an acceptance of criteria set by private or public sector organisations and officialdom, often at supra-national level and increasingly
across national boundaries. The attempts to standardise vocational qualifications within the EU and to harmonise levels of competencies and academic achievements, though not cloaked in success, have arguably helped to promote integration processes. Moschanas (1998: 2) calls this the cultural-political dimension of education wherein educational rights are associated with citizenship rights, i.e. with the need to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of member states.

Social integration and freedom of movement have been dominant factors in the EU’s political agenda since its foundation in 1957. Various political actions, particularly those of the 1970s, ensured that member states would not discriminate between citizens and foreigners from other countries in matters of access to occupations. CEDEFOP’s remit in 1975 was "to assist the Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational training and continuing education" (Founding Regulations: Article 2). CEDEFOP’s early initiatives involved the study of comparability of vocational training qualifications in the member states. More than 200 occupations were characterised and equivalences were determined on the assumption that member state vocational training policies would be brought into line so that vocational training qualifications and certificates would be accepted in all member countries. However, since 1988 mutual recognition of all post-secondary and training programmes of at least three years after the end of secondary education among member countries is a reality. Recognition, according to Blitz (1999: 312), has been influenced in many ways: as equivalence, that is, unconditional and full acceptance of one’s educational qualifications and training for the purposes of employment; as partial recognition, that is, the conditional acceptance of qualifications and training and the demand that additional requirement be fulfilled
beforehand; or the acceptance of periods of specific short-term training or study abroad as credit towards another qualification. “While there is little universal agreement on the notion or recognition, and indeed, all of the above definitions have been applied, the recognition of qualifications is a topical issue in the European Union” (ibid). Despite the confusion, at least nowadays, every citizen of the Community has the right to require the host member country to examine and to take into account the diplomas that he or she has acquired in another member country in order to determine whether they correspond to those required of its own nationals. Beyond this principle recognition is automatic in the case of community systems established by specific directives (Collins 1993:16).

To some extent, however, the original rationale embedded in the Treaty of Rome has since disappeared. The main reason for the various items of legislation was the mobility of workers from the poorest countries wishing to take up work in countries which offered better opportunities - but this has not really happened. Freedom of movement is not only desirable on humanitarian grounds, one of key arguments in its favour is its potential to combat social exclusion by bringing the supply of labour where the demand for labour exists. Fevre (1998:75) maintains that there is little evidence that the dismantling of its internal obstacles within the EU has created the sort of migration flow which would suggest that freedom of movement is on its way. Apart from managerial positions geographical mobility remains very weak even within individual European countries, and this is even more true when it entails crossing borders and confronting difficulties of an institutional, cultural and above all linguistic order. Nowadays, mobility involves mainly only frontier workers, managers and students, in most cases qualifications of frontier workers are low and problems of
recognition hardly present themselves. In certain large multinational companies.

mobility has become a means of professional advancement among young people.

Some multinationals have undertaken studies on the value of foreign degrees but most
have sufficient information and networks they can draw on (OECD 1996b, 67-83).

But matters are rarely that straightforward. Hughes and Thomas (1996: 110)
investigated cultural influences and language issues on the professions in EU
countries with particular reference to pharmacy and law. Pharmacists in the
Netherlands and Denmark, for example, advertise their courses jointly and use
English as the language of instruction. This language facility helps their professional
work throughout the English-speaking world. The authors point out that the use of
English helps to overcome problems of dialect in the Netherlands. But the lack of
English hinders movement in the EU where the norm of the country is to speak only
one language (leaving aside minority languages).

The changing role of vocational and technical education and training highlights
numerous cross-cultural complexities, particularly in the context of assessing and
certifying occupational skills and competencies. The attempted harmonising of
qualifications stumbled over problems of definition as well as terminology,
particularly when different institutional and social contexts were involved. Problems
of terminology were not language ones but conceptual ones. These are often hazy
even within Member countries (OECD 1996b: 8). Furthermore, the single model of
harmonising qualifications applicable to all member countries has more or less failed
for two reasons: national contexts and cultural traditions impose barriers; individuals
are free to make choices. They can choose to stay in the home country or to take up
opportunities elsewhere.
Ryan (1991:3) refers to the mushrooming of comparative research in vocational education and training. Such research, however, is particularly problematic since standardising factors differ considerably between the countries in question. International comparisons may be used for description and explanation but they are also used to explain why these differences have emerged and why they are important. Ryan (1991:12) finds that when comparisons become analytical their contributions become particularly fraught. He refers to two important restraints: first, myth and intrinsic limits on information. The influence of myth requires careful handling, since descriptions, which usually contain elements of truth, are also liable to oversimplification, stereotyping and distortion. The second difficulty centres around multivariate statistical inferences, compounded by the number of countries involved. Watson (1994: 83) agrees. The problems of cross-cultural transfer and comparability are almost as old as history. “We know from the Bible that God was far from pleased when the Israelites adopted foreign customs and married pagan wives, while St. Paul had to adapt the gospel message to the different cultural contexts of the Mediterranean region,” he states somewhat contentiously. Perhaps the points of comparative research are no longer connected with cross-cultural transfer and adaptability of standards but with the seeking of common understanding and a shared professional discourse. Much depends on who is undertaking comparisons and for what purpose.

However, sharing the idea of Europe and its tasks for education and training has occupied scholars in education and adult education for several years (Ryba 1992, Jannsen 1993, Frischkopf 1993, Siebert 1994, Müller-Solger 1996, Knoll 1996c, Künzel 1996, Field 1998 among numerous others). Most question the role of and
tasks for adult education in both vocational education and training and general adult education against the background of increasing European-wide standardisation. Knoll (1996b:99), for example, considers that the Treaty of Rome has achieved a lot; Künzel (1996) analyses vocational adult education in Europe; Field (1997:240), in a comparative study, reports findings of a research project involving professional adult educators where most respondents considered the European dimension to be important but doubted whether their organisations thought likewise. Ryba (1992), again comparatively, describes the weariness schoolteachers in several European countries experienced with the introduction of European awareness into curricula, which were already heavily overburdened. Davies (1997:119), also from the perspective of comparative school education, links the teaching of history to the teaching of European citizenship and the fact that currently history teachers are caught in "confusing academic debates and political conflicts". He argues that it is not possible to find a clear unambiguous picture of Europe and that postmodernist interpretations have tended to make this difficult situation even less clear. On the whole the teaching about Europe, he argues, remains confined to specific subjects such as history, geography and modern languages.

European programmes such as the ERASMUS and LINGUA schemes, designed to encourage mobility, have done much to allow an hitherto unparalleled number of students, educators and policy-makers to gain first-hand experiences of the European dimension. The ERASMUS programme for students of higher education, launched in 1987 and integrated into the SOCRATES programme in 1995, has proven to be particularly successful, at least in terms of participant numbers. 400,000 students have had the opportunity to follow a recognised period of study in another university and
1,800 establishments have taken part in European co-operation activities. These figures include nearly all universities as well as a large number of non-university higher education institutions (Delors 1996:185). In addition there are numerous other students from within the EU attending universities outside their home countries though statistics are not easy to disentangle. In 1993-94, for example, within the group Germany-France-United Kingdom, the United Kingdom was a net importer of students from EU countries compared with the two other countries in contrast to Germany which sent more students abroad than the other two (SOCRATES 1998).

The LINGUA strand, too, has enabled nearly 19,000 teachers to undertake training abroad and created 4,000 school partnerships involving 83,000 young people and teachers. The LEONARDO programme, with its focus on vocational training, offered 54,000 young people mobility grants for training periods in the participating countries (Nuffield 1998:11). The new Action Programmes (2000-2006), available this time to 25 countries stress the value of European citizenship and shared European identity.

Field (1998: 95) strikes a cautionary note, however, by stating that far from helping construct such a common identity, the encouragement of international student mobility is entirely congruent with the interests of individual nation states and individual institutions within those states.

Whoever way one might want to interpret these statistics, they do point to a considerable number of people who are experiencing another European country and interacting with the people of that country. These experiences are intended to challenge parochial attitudes and perceptions of stereotypic behaviour, help develop cross-cultural communication skills and deepen understanding of different cultural norms as well as deepen as their own. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Amsterdam Treaty
of 1997 committed member states to developing citizenship of the Union, not just in a legal sense but also through fulfilment of the ideal of a Europe close to its citizens.

The notion of a developing European citizenship as something, which has to be understood out of the present rather than out of the past, is expressed in the following statement issued on behalf of the European Commission:

European citizenship is above all a humanist concept, founded on the construction of a greater Europe characterised by cultural differences, by different economic conceptions, and by different natural realities- but united by the sense of belonging to a common civilisation. It is on the basis of a shared democratic culture that this greater Europe will construct itself and in which Europeans will recognise themselves as citizens of Europe. They will not regard themselves as citizens of Europe because they belong to a common culture, or on the basis of a particular dimension of belonging. Rather, they will do so because they will construct themselves as citizens of Europe on the basis of new relations which they will establish between themselves (Reiffers 1997:16).

The word citizenship, in the current language of the EU, implies a holistic conception more appropriate to modern European society, which can incorporate legal, political and social elements as well as working critically with a foundation of diverse and overlapping values and identities. It is this very complexity and fluidity that enables the maintenance of a negotiated social integration that can adequately encompass all those who live in today's Europe and hence have a stake in its shape and future (European Commission 1998, 11-12).

**Collaboration in adult education**

Within the boundaries of this study it is assumed that most comparative research is undertaken by individual scholars – leaving aside projects undertaken at supranational level by, for example, the OECD or the World Bank, with which I am not
Chapter 5 Accommodating differences: challenges and responses

Concerned here. In the main, scholars, be they researchers and or adult educators, begin such studies against the background of their own personal life histories and experiences in relation to the other country and, indeed, their own. Some may have lived in the country or countries to be studied at one time in their lives and are able to communicate with scholars of that country in the other language. Others may have personal reasons such as having friends, partners, and relatives in that country. There are also individuals, like myself, who were born and educated in one country and who, in due course, settled in another and who by undertaking comparative studies, want to attach meaning to their own life histories. Here reflection about similarities and difference between either country occur on an almost daily basis and in many different contexts. Conversely, there are scholars whose motivation is extrinsic, that is, they have no particular personal reason for wanting to engage in comparisons but who are drawn into one solely for functional reasons. Increasingly, too, comparative research is undertaken by individuals who work within one of the many collaborative partnerships such as those supported by the European Union. Here researchers tend not to undertake comparative research as individuals; instead they investigate their own countries on the basis of a particular expertise. The groups then evaluate the respective findings collectively and draw comparative conclusions. In all of these settings some aspects of cross-cultural communication difficulties are likely to occur. Members of groups share a common professional bond and discourse. But they also draw on different languages, sets of experiences, perceptions and prejudices, knowledge and understanding about each other’s countries as well as their own. The European Union projects DELPHI, THENUCE and MOPED serve to illustrate some of the key points to be raised.
The SOCRATES 1995-1999 Action programmes for co-operation in the field of education have promulgated international collaboration in adult continuing education. Its main objectives among others were to

- develop the European dimension in education;
- promote improved knowledge of European languages;
- promote the intercultural dimension of education;
- enhance the quality of education by means of European co-operation;
- promote mobility of teaching staff and students;
- encourage recognition of diplomas, periods of study and other qualifications.

Subsequently a broad range of activities was sponsored. These include transnational projects, thematic networks, partnerships and associations, joint developments of curricula modules and other educational materials as well and transnational training courses for education staff and visits to facilitate these projects (SOCRATES, The European Commission, DGXXII). THENUCE, for example, a Thematic Network Project on University Continuing Education, was initiated by EUCEN, the European Universities Continuing Education Network. The network itself was founded in 1991. With a membership of 120 universities in 20 countries, the network regards itself nowadays as the largest European university network in the field of continuing education. The aims of THENUCE project were to "give a new wider European dimension and target to the network activities, building on what EUCEN has started on a limited scale, by developing Europe-wide actions and means of identifying and disseminating such good practice" (THENUCE, Interim Report, 1997: 3).

The project highlights not only the particular complexities of UCE (university continuing education) but also those of conceptual and linguistic dimensions in a
multi-national context. For example, the project's first year objectives included the task of identifying and collecting good practice and obstacles/problems in consultation with all partners in their own countries. The Interim Report's main findings conclude, not surprisingly, that there is no clear-cut European definition of UCE and that a multitude of conceptions covering a wide range of practices abounds. "It is sometimes difficult to find a clear and unanimous definition of UCE at the national level. The different forms of continuing education include distance education as well as part-time studies and full time university courses. However, the frontiers between adult and continuing education, as well as between initial education and continuing education are more and more difficult to draw" (page 6). The Interim Report points to the human element in these undertakings by concluding that "the report comes from a network operation that proved the advantages and flaws of such a structure even in terms of low commitment from some participants of the network" (page 30).

In its final report THENUCE states that EUCEN meets a need for those working in UCE. Its membership had grown in 8 years from 25 to 160 universities in 27 European countries. However, in its evaluation of the scheme, the report is somewhat cautious. Although partners in the project had been able to undertake relevant data collection UCE was radically differently organised in each country. In addition, it was difficult to find a 'European' dimension to the project. Nevertheless, despite outlined difficulties, the report concludes that the analytic framework, i.e. the fundamental principles guiding this work, are of great important and should guide the future steps taken in the networking in a project of this type (THENUCE 1999).
There are, however, other dimensions to successful completion of intercultural projects. These relate not only to differences in the organisation of institutions or in the clarification of concepts but also to language and communication complexities and, in some cases, human dimensions. An example of a European-wide project, which might have lent itself to becoming a major comparative study in adult education, was the Eurodephli Project (1993 - 1995). It was initiated in Belgium and sought to examine the future of adult education and lifelong learning in Europe across a number of European countries (Leirman 1995, Gerver 1995, Jarvis and Dubelaar 1996b). The project addressed experts from four different ‘actor’ categories in the field of adult education: research, practice, politics and journalism. Its main aim was to identify and evaluate educational needs of adults, adequacy of provision, aspects of state involvement and of “Europeanisation” in adult education. Based on a similar study carried out in Belgium in 1992, it aimed at giving profile to the development of a concerted European policy of continuing education. That the project did not fulfil its initial aims was due, at least partially, to culturally diverse conceptions, processes and goal-orientations complicated by the fact that the project had originated in one country but that this model could not easily be transferred into different countries and cultural settings. It is not surprising that internal conflicts and cross-cultural communication difficulties, apparently, got in the way (Künzel 1997: 331).

Similar issues were raised in the MOPED (Monitoring as a Process of Dialogue) project though with different outcomes. The report concerns the evaluation of all 102 adult education projects within the SOCRATES programme (1995-1997). Adopted by the European Commission in December 1996 as a ‘complementary measure’ its main aims included:
• generating research criteria with the aim of ensuring comparability of innovative measures of a certain number of projects in adult education. In this way a solid information basis will be created that will facilitate the assessment of the political-educational relevance of the evaluated SOCRATES projects and the outcome that than be expected from them;

• presentation of accompanying and supportive measures for project development. This complex of activities is aimed at (a)(outwardly) enlarging the scope of projects and (b) (inwardly) ensuring that their creative and cognitive resources will be used to the best advantage (Nuissl 1998: 5).

The appointed international panel of experts consisted of only seven members of seven different countries who were engaged in the process of genuine international comparative evaluation. In this exercise, according to Nuissl, language problems hardly ever occurred, thanks to panel’s wide-ranging linguistic skills - their first languages were German (2), English, Italian, Greek, Danish and Spanish; second languages were French (3), Italian (2), German and Swedish; third languages were English (3), French (2) Spanish and fourth languages English (3) and French, though English proved to be a suitable medium for communication (page 8). Nuissl found the initial rounds of explorative discussion, almost the most valuable experience of the whole enterprise: "Diese Kriteriendiskussion war ganz hervorragend...Das Produkt ist schon deshalb interessant, weil es tatsächlich eine internationale Evaluation ist, unter der Vereinbarung der gemeinsamen Kriterien. Das ist, soweit ich das übersehen kann, ganz selten." (The discussion around criteria was really excellent. The product is particularly interesting, because it is an international evaluation, following agreement about shared criteria. That is, as far as I can see, very rare) (Nuissl in conversation, December 1998)
One of the main aims of the SOCRATES projects on adult education was to enhance the perception of European cultures and to encourage an exchange and to improve mutual acceptance among them. Intercultural co-operation was, therefore, an important evaluation criterion. The Report describes how the various SOCRATES projects dealt with language problems, that is, project partners agreed on a working language and to adapt themselves to that working language and to use that language in discussions. The variety of languages was felt to be enriching but also to lessen the efficiency. Reciprocal explanations of terminology were necessary which were time consuming and difficult to realise. More than one language itself and the differences in cultural backgrounds proved a problem, for example, particularly when the framework conditions or the social or historical background of the countries involved were being discussed. Sometimes, however, partners of a monolingual project were also confronted with divergent ideas. Frameworks which were jointly developed in one language only, were often felt to be disadvantaged and lacking in cultural understanding and social loyalty. "It becomes obvious, that adult education has taken different ways in the North and South of Europe respectively. The same applies to the difference in cultural backgrounds between Western and Eastern Europe" (Nuissl 1998: 50). The report recommends that these difficulties should be anticipated and faced in a purposive manner by enabling specific projects (under a common programme, if possible) to develop ways of dealing with the different cultural points of departure.

With reference to research and evaluation, Nuissl, however finds that this is one of those areas which were handled rather poorly. Research is vital, he states, if the results
which have already been achieved are not to be forgotten and mistakes are not to be
repeated. "In the case of research and evaluation, the lack of adequate activities is
particularly obvious. The SOCRATES projects under evaluation did, of course,
conduct research work, but this was always in preparation of their products. What was
completely missing, was research with a global perspective. From this it is evident
that research and evaluation will have to be among the main topics of adult education

In many other SOCRATES projects, Nuissl confirms, there is little emphasis on
reflection on the comparative process itself or on evaluation of the outcomes. Yet the
enterprise of evaluation is currently one of the new growth areas in most public-sector
areas of education. It is not my intention to venture deeply into the subject, suffice to
say, that nowadays any form of evaluation is linked to the notions of ‘value for
money’ and to formal processes of performance rating, appraisal, audit and quality
assurance. In the social sciences evaluation is regarded as a theoretical growth area
with different schools of thought which is distinct from other approaches in research
methodology. Pawson and Tilley (1997:1 7) for example, refer to the 1970s when
many social sciences which were gripped with debates on positivism, and later by the
rise of ‘oppositional’ perspectives such as the interpretive approach, phenomenology,
hermeneutics, naturalism and so on. The tide, they argue coincided with the pragmatic
turn in evaluation and then to constructivism. This offers a different organisation
focus for evaluation, which moves the lead item on the agenda from the political to
the social. Hence initiatives and programmes should not be treated as independent
variables. Rather, all social programmes are constituted in complex processes of
human understanding and interaction. Chelimsky and Shadish (1997: 9) state that the
purpose of evaluation was to measure and account for the results of public policies and programmes; to determine the efficiency of programmes, projects and their component processes; to gain explanatory insights into social and other public problems and into the past and present efforts to address them; to understand how organisations learn; to strengthen institutions and to increase agency responsiveness to the public. Perhaps emerging theories in evaluation could stimulate debates in comparative adult education since evaluation and reflection are central to all their activities?

Networking: theoretical considerations

As previously discussed, the action programmes initiated by the EU on the basis of specified criteria aims and objectives and anticipated outcomes in education and training have been accompanied by series of networks which may, or may not, continue once the projects have been concluded. Networking across more than one country is not a new phenomenon. UNESCO or the European Bureau for Adult Education (since 1998 The European Association for the Education of Adults) have, indeed, been active networkers over quite some time. Theoretical discussions and typologies around networking concepts are used in sociology, social psychology, social anthropology and political science but similar approaches have not yet evolved for adult continuing education. It seems to me, they cannot be dismissed - on the contrary, they seem appropriate in the context of this study bearing advances in computer-mediated communication and globalisation in mind. Most theories in the social sciences stress levels of co-operation and trust which need to be sustained within networks (Thompson in Thompson et al. 1991: 171). Networks co-ordinate
through less formal, more egalitarian and co-operative means. They share common features by stressing various forms of interdependencies and relationships within such groups. They involve actors who participate in social systems with other actors and various levels of structure within social systems. Some evolve out of common interests while others have specific pre-determined functions and hence limited lifespans.

Marsh and Rhodes (1992:13) with reference to the policy-making profession describe professional networks as networks, which are characterised by the pre-eminence of one class of participants. Hence professional networks express the interest of a particular profession and manifest a substantial degree of vertical independence by insulating themselves from other networks. Marsh and Rhodes (1992:1) introduce the concept of the ‘meso-level’, a concept which provides a link between micro-level of analysis (which deals with the role of interests and government in relation to particular policy decisions) and the macro-level of analysis (which is concerned with broader questions concerning distribution of power within contemporary society). The meso-level represents a form of intermediation between interest groups and the government, not attached to two previous models: a pluralist model and a corporatist one. Historically, the dominant pluralist model is defined as a system of interest representation in which constituent units are organised into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, non-hierarchically ordered and self-determined units. In other words, they present groups in which the leadership is responsive mainly to its membership. Corporatist models, on the other hand, present groups which are organised on a non-competitive, hierarchical and functional basis. Neither of these terms seem adequate to describe collaborative partnerships and networking in the
context of EU-sponsored programmes. Marsh and Rhodes (1992: 3) point out to that inadequacies of such models have stimulated renewed interest in networking theories. Their work on intergovernmental theory is appropriate to the context of the European Union and hence of relevance to educational providers in its membership countries. They formulate five propositions:

- Any organisation is dependent upon other organisations for resources.
- In order to achieve their goals, the organisations have to exchange resources.
- Although decision making within the organisation is constrained by other organisations, the dominant coalition retains some discretion. The appreciative system of the dominant coalition influences which relationships are seen as a problem and which resources will be sought.
- The dominant coalition employs strategies within known rules of the game to regulate the process of exchange.
- Variations in the degree of discretion are a product of the goals and the relative power potential of interaction organisations. The relative power potential is a product of resources each organisation, of the rules of the game and the process of exchange between organisations.

Such policy models describe power and resource relationships that are important particularly in the context of European action programmes referred to before. Coleman (1994: 300-306), however, considers the human dimension when he relates networking to what he terms 'social capital' theories. He refers to 'social capital, as opposed to 'human capital', to describe individuals making the best use of their own resources in the context of social relationships, such as family or community social organisations. Coleman refers to a perpetuated fiction in modern society which claims that society consists of individuals, each of whom acts to achieve goals that are independently arrived at, and that the functioning of the social system consists of the
combination of these actions of independent individuals. This fiction is expressed in the economic theory of perfect competition in the market.

Social capital is defined by its function. It’s not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Like physical capital and human capital, social capital is not completely fungible, but is fungible with respect to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful to others. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production (Coleman 1994:302)

[The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995, defines ‘fungible’ as something that can serve for, or be replaced by, another answering the same definition]

According to Coleman almost any form of social grouping constitutes social capital. He refers to farming networks, voluntary organisations, and community activities or parent associations. These groups are based on relationships of mutuality and trust as well as exclusion. Professional networks in adult education, it might be possible to argue, also require elements of trust and professional ethics, however, they also exclude those who are not part of the same academic community.

The impact of the current technological revolution on networking cannot be overstated. It is hard to recall working conditions without electronic communications of one form or another; even harder to imagine a future without them. They challenge notions of trust and professional ethics, professional and personal relationships and affect our understanding of mutuality and communication. The functional
technological purpose of networks is considered by Hiltz and Turoff (1993) who argue that the widespread availability of human communication via the computer will mean the ultimate replacement of urban networks as a basic form of social organisation in postindustrial society by national and international networks. One way to view computer conferencing systems is as an electronic communication network that obviates the necessity to be co-located in a dense urban area in order to have sufficient cheap communication ties, or to overcome large distances. Instead of thinking of a nation or society as a collection of communities, Hiltz and Turoff suggest, we need to think of it as a complex set of overlapping networks of actual and potential communication and exchange (xxiv). We will become, or have become already, a network nation, exchanging vast amounts of both information and socio-emotional communication with friends, colleagues, even strangers who share similar interests. At the same time computer networks, are, in the words of Castells, creating new forms and channels of communication, shaping life and being shaped by life at the same time (Castells 1996: 2).

Castells (1996: 61) refers to the information technology paradigm. Accordingly, the notion of the technological paradigm helps to organise the essence of current technological transformation as it interacts with economy and society.

"The first characteristic of the new paradigm is that information is its raw material: these are technologies to act on information, not just information to act on technology, as was the case in previous technological revolutions." The second feature refers to the pervasiveness of effects of the new technologies. Because information is an integral part of all human activity, all processes of our individual and collective existence are directly shaped (although certainly not determined) by the
new technological medium. The third characteristic refers to the networking logic of any system or set of relationships using these new information technologies. The morphology of the network seems well adapted to increasing complexity of interaction and to unpredictable patterns of development arising from the creative power of such interaction. This topological configuration, the network, can now be materially implemented in all kinds of processes and organisations, by the newly available information technologies. Without them, the networking logic would be too cumbersome to implement. Yet this networking logic is needed to structure the unstructured while preserving the flexibility, since the unstructured is the driving force of innovation in human activity (his italics).

Castells (1996:469-478) talks of a ‘network society’. He defines the concept of network (page 470) as ‘a set of interconnected nodes’.

A node is the point at which the curve intersects itself. What a node is, concretely speaking, depends on the kind of concrete networks of which we speak. They are stock exchange markets, and their ancillary advanced services centres, in the network of financial flows. They are national councils of ministers and European Commissioners in the political network that govern the European Union. They are coca fields and poppy fields, clandestine laboratories, secret landing strips, street gangs and money-laundering financial institutions, in the network of drug traffic that penetrates economies, societies, and states throughout the world. They are television systems, entertainment studios, computer graphic milieux, news teams, and mobile devices generating, transmitting and receiving signals, in the global network of the new media and the roots of the cultural expression and public opinion in the information age (Castells 1996:470).

Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as link as long as they are able to communicate within the same network, namely as long as they are share the same communication codes (for example, values and performance...
goals). “A network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance” (page 470). There is a belief that computer-mediated communication systems have powerful effects on social relationships: social hierarchies are dissolved and flatter, more egalitarian social organisations emerge. Networked communications, it is argued, will usher in a renewed era of democratic participation and revitalised community. But as with all technologies, central problems of social relationships remain, although in new and possibly more challenging forms (Kollock, Smith in Herring et al. 1996:109).

There are several aspects to international professional networking, computer-mediated or not, which shape the developments in comparative research. These relate to the dissemination of knowledge and information as well as cross-cultural communication processes and levels of understanding. However, these are new areas in terms of comparative research which need further research and embedding into some kind of theoretical framework.

Blumer, McLeod and Rosengreen (1992:3) from the perspective of communication studies in sociology, refer to three distinct contributions to knowledge that only comparative research — however demanding to conceive, organise and carry out — can offer. First, at the level of observation, comparative inquiry cosmopolitanises, opening the eyes to communication patterns and problems unnoticeable in our own spatial and temporal milieus. It helps us, they argue, to see communication arrangements and problems in a fresh light, enriches the raw material and deepens the appreciation of issues, learning how they have arisen and been dealt with in other places and periods. Secondly, only comparative research can overcome the space- and time-bound...
limitations on the generalisability of theories, assumptions, and propositions. Thirdly, only comparative analysis can explore and reveal the consequences of differences in how, in this instance, communication is organised at a macrosocietal level. Kenway (1996: 217) points out that in educational research the emphasis is usually on such technologies as tools for learning or as a means of enhancement for more of the same. In such works, she argues, there is usually “a wilful blindness to the genuinely new and to social and cultural contexts and implications of technology.” Unlike the telephone, print, television, movies and radio, the Internet offers many different ways of communicating and readily opens the way to membership of an array of new communities. It also offers individuals the chance to become creative and produce their own cultural products. However, Kenway asks, what sorts of products and what sorts of knowledge are being offered? Whose knowledge is it and what does it say to users about who they are, how they should behave and what they should value?

“Cross-national issues arise here too with regard to cross-cultural sensitivity, rights, responsibilities on the Internet. For example, what is considered perfectly acceptable in one country may be considered to be offensive in another “(page 225). Cross-cultural differences can also occur in terms of language use and the presentation of information, or questions to be asked to obtain that information.

As researchers’ international contacts multiply – through professional associations, conferences, visiting appointments and the learned literature – scholars from different countries naturally think of working together on common problems. Any kind of networking involves the senders and receivers of messages which have to be formulated and understood. Both the senders and receivers of these messages are embedded in their own cultural, spatial and temporal milieux. Furthermore, messages
sent are often fragmented and taken out of a context not always immediately apparent to those who receive them. Computer-mediated networking, precisely because of its time-distance concentration fosters fragmentation of information and knowledge making overall comprehension more difficult.

**Conclusion and further questions**

Several issues emerge out of these investigations: researchers and scholars in adult continuing education are becoming increasingly involved in international activities and networking; adult continuing education remains a complex area in which to research; language issues and cultural issues are significant factors which should not be overlooked; most comparative activities seem to lack effective tools for evaluation purposes. The mushrooming of the various international networks in adult continuing education seems to me an under-researched phenomenon, yet it is one of importance to the discussion on comparative adult education. At one level these activities concern the dissemination of information and knowledge. On another they relate to increasingly European, if not global, dimensions of a complex field of study. But networking also involves a human dimension linked to a sense of belonging to a professional community extending across national boundaries. The THENUCE report confirms the complexities of university continuing education. The report itself, while it informs about activities and networks in the participating countries, nevertheless remains inconclusive in comparative terms. By contrast Osborne, Sandberg and Tuomi (2000) in their comparative study resulting out of THENUCE on university continuing education in Finland, Scotland and Sweden refer to a convergence in the sense that UCE is viewed as one mechanism for preparing more people for the
economic necessities of modern society. The authors refer to forces working in this direction including the growing importance of the single European market, globalisation and the need for growth and competence and knowledge as important prerequisites for economic growth and welfare. The consequences of the increased volume in the use of the Internet for the purposes of comparative investigations and for professional networking remain unforeseeable for the time being. As Gray (1999:125) points out, the Internet is an educational tool of enormous potential, yet we know so little about how people will want to make use of it. Furthermore, increasingly knowledge is dissected and presented in fragments via the Internet, making the construction of something cohesive and worthwhile a complex undertaking. It is not difficult to find basic statistics about educational activities in many countries via the Internet.

Hake (1997b) with reference to ESREA raises other dimensions by stating that throughout Europe, there remain very significant differences with regard to distinctive academic cultures, the academic and organisational traditions of universities and their acceptance of adult continuing education as a discipline in its own right. These differences are fundamental and have to be recognised if greater co-operation is to be sought. Overcoming the lack of knowledge of different traditions and perspectives in Europe is bedevilled by the existence of three mutually exclusive language-based forums which utilise the English, French and German languages. ESREA, according to Hake, has not yet been able to break through this fundamental barrier of communication in a united European forum.
Communication, however, is the tool which enables such processes to take place; communication processes which are embedded in cultural meaning and which, if not handled with sensitivity, can lead to communication barriers and breakdown. The importance of communication as a topic, however, deserves our attention, because, as Lambo so aptly states,

> Individuals, groups, departments of knowledge, peoples separated by cultural differences, failing to make ourselves understood across barriers of prejudice, suspicion and misunderstanding of motive, live in dangerous tension. Even when dealing with highly technical matters, professionally trained men and women encounter obstacles constructed of prejudices and emotional attitudes which impede their joint efforts" (Lambo in Unesco Press 1975: 195).

By referring to professionally trained men and women, Lambo raises an important point. In adult education circles, particularly in countries which had to cope with a large intake of immigrants following the Second World War, it has long been good practice to sensitise others about the rights and needs of those less fortunate than ourselves. Multicultural adult education was and continues to be the springboard for many activities, policies and theoretical constructs. The emphasis is on the normative values of education, usually in a power relationship, however, well intentioned. Yet the researcher experiences other cultures, that is other ways of interpreting and perceiving the world. This experience challenges notions of his or her preconceived understanding in a quite fundamental way. In a cross – or intercultural context both necessitate deep-level understanding of elements, units, even fragments of units which are shared and hence similar and those which differ. These issues I aim to address in the following chapter.
Chapter 6

Interpreting cultural meaning: knowledge, communication and understanding.

My knowledge of everyday life has the quality of an instrument that cuts a path through a forest and, as it does so, projects a narrow cone of light on what lies just ahead and immediately around; on all sides of the path there continues to be darkness (Berger and Luckmann 1971: 59).

In the context of globalisation, cyberspace and what is commonly understood as the information explosion or the information age, traditional concepts of knowledge and culture may have to viewed from a different perspective. Goodenow (1996: 200) refers to international trade and services which are characterised by a rapid growth of borderless economic supply and standardised forms of networked communication. Clearly, he argues, there is a ‘pluralism’ that does not reflect traditional definitions of cultural pluralism. Scholars and individuals who share knowledge are also using the Internet to educate, protyletise and organise, cutting across national boundaries with ease. Comparative studies in education face similar challenges. Instant access to stocks of knowledge from and about other countries and communities eases the flow of information but not lead to enhanced levels of intercultural understanding in comparative terms. For example, web pages of institutions and organisations no doubt relate useful information but, if this information is to carry any meaning at all, it needs to be understood within its own cultural context. While it may seem that a convergence of information and knowledge is a welcome process, much of the information received is fragmented and in danger of creating barriers where none
should exist. It might sound like a cliché to say we know more but understand less, but there is an element of truth attached to such a saying. Byram (1988:20) with regard to second language pedagogy, distinguishes between cultural knowledge and cultural information in the following way: knowledge refers to the presentation of ideas and concepts, facts and materials about foreign countries and people in a structured way. This knowledge is structured information, and more than the aggregate of facts contained within its structure. The nature of the structure may vary according to pedagogic and other principles, whereas information involves the arbitrary and decontextualised presentation of facts with only minimal and usually unprincipled structure. Furthermore, information, knowledge and the meaning attached to both depend on our understanding and use of language to which further complexities are added if language barriers intervene.

**Knowledge and language**

Viewed from a 'before the advent of the Internet' perspective, Berger and Luckmann (1971:61) relate knowledge to a socially available stock of knowledge which is distributed, as least in outline, and hence is in itself an important element of that same stock of knowledge. “In everyday life I know, at least roughly, what I can hide from whom, whom I can turn to for information on what I do not know, and generally which types of individuals may be expected to have which type of knowledge.” The statement may be apt, though in the age of the Internet, it is much more a question of to what I can turn to rather than to whom. Nor does the notion of a defined available stock of knowledge to be distributed encapsulate the contemporary view of its limitless nature. However, Berger and Luckmann also talk of knowledge which
constitutes the motivating dynamics of institutionalised conduct. Knowledge defines the institutionalised areas of conduct, designates all situations falling within them and constructs roles to be played in the context of institutions in question. “Since this knowledge is socially objectivated as knowledge, that is, as a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical deviance from the institutional order appears a departure from reality” (page 83). Berger and Luckmann continue to state that what is taken for granted as knowledge in society comes to be coexistensive with knowable, or at any rate provides the framework within which anything not yet known will come to be known in the future (ibid.) Furthermore, language provides the means for objectifying new experiences, allowing their incorporation into the already existing stock of knowledge, and it is, in their words, the most important means by which objectivations and objectified sedimentations are transmitted in the tradition of the collectivity in question.

Berger and Luckmann (1971: 156-158) talk of primary and secondary socialisation. The former involves learning from childhood through to adolescence in sequences which are socially defined so that the individual becomes an effective member of society. The latter refers to institution-based ‘sub-worlds’ and the social distribution of ‘special knowledge’ which arises out of the division of labour, role-specific vocabulary and the internalisation of semantic fields. These are more or less cohesive realities characterised by normative and affective as well as cognitive components. Foucault (1972) challenges notions of established intellectual areas of knowledge and histories of ideas in the disciplines.
Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogenous manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn development of a science striving to exist and to reach conclusions at the very outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity, one is trying to detect the incidence of interruption. Interruptions whose status and nature vary considerably. (Foucault 1972: 4)

However, in a globalising postmodern world interruptions are common day occurrences and sub-worlds in the Berger and Luckmann sense, extent beyond institutions and borders. Sub-worlds, however, develop their own discourse, which can both include and exclude. Technical language, for example, can exclude those who do not share the 'technical' aspect of language and include those who do, if even they do have the same mother tongue. In other words, there is more than one aspect of language to consider. The emphasis is therefore on what functions and purposes the application of knowledge serves when used in communication with others.

Lyotard (1984:3) emphasises the relationship between language and knowledge. He places these arguments into the contemporary context by stating that the state of knowledge has altered as societies have entered what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age. This transition is faster or slower depending on the country and its varied activities. He refers to scientific knowledge as a kind of discourse with which leading sciences which have had to do with language are involved: theories of linguistics, problems of communication and cybernetics, computers and their language, problems of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages. These technological transformations, Lyotard argues, can be expected to have a considerable impact on
knowledge. The nature of knowledge cannot survive unchanged in this context of
general transformation. "We can predict that anything in the constituted body of
knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned and that the direction
of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being
translatable into computer language." (page 4). He relates this new kind of knowledge
to producers and users of knowledge who possess skills in translating into these
languages. Along with the hegemony of computers comes a certain logic, Lyotard
continues, and therefore a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements
are accepted as "knowledge" statements. "The old principle that the acquisition of
knowledge is indisociable from the training (Bildung) of minds or even individuals, is
becoming obsolete and will become ever more so."

It is not hard to visualise learning circulating along the same lines as
money, instead for its 'educational' value or political (administrative,
diplomatic, military) importance; the pertinent distinction would no
longer be between knowledge and ignorance, but rather, as the case
is with money, between "payment knowledge" and "investment
knowledge" - in other words, between units of knowledge
exchanged and a daily maintenance framework (the reconstitution of
the work force, "survival") versus funds of knowledge dedicated to
optimizing the performance of a project (Lyotard 1984:6).

Scientific knowledge, Lyotard concedes, does not represent the totality of knowledge.
It has always existed alongside another kind of knowledge which he calls narrative.
Narration, he argues, is the quintessential form of customary knowledge. Story telling
is one form of narrative knowledge, another lends itself to a great variety of language
games, so do denotic statements prescribing what should be done, involving
challenges, evaluative statements and other areas of competences which are tightly
woven together in the web of forms, ordered by a unified viewpoint characteristic of
this kind of knowledge (1984:20-21). Lyotard then refers to a third property which relates to the transmission of narratives, the narrator, sender, addressee, speech acts etc. Thus speech acts relevant to this form of knowledge are performed not only by the speaker but also by the listener. Narrative tradition refers to 'know-how', knowing how to speak, and knowing how to hear (savoir-faire, savoir-dire, savoir-entendre) – all terms familiar to those involved in the teaching of second languages.

Narratives, as we have seen, determine the criteria of competence and/or illustrate how they are to be applied. They thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do (Lyotard 1984: 23).

Habermas (1979: 16-19) refers to an ‘everyday knowledge’, ‘pretheoretical knowledge’ or ‘intuitive knowledge’ of an object domain that we possess prior to science and in relation to language use. He (1984: 8) relates language and knowledge to its practical application by linking his understanding of knowledge to rationality (a word much more widely in everyday German than in English). “Our knowledge has a propositional structure; beliefs can be presented in forms of statements.” Rationality, he argues, has to do with the possession of knowledge and how, when speaking and acting, subjects acquire and use knowledge. In linguistic utterances knowledge is expressed explicitly; in goal-directed actions an ability, an implicit knowledge is expressed; this know-how can in principle also be transformed into know-that.

Knowledge, he argues, can be criticised as unreliable. Furthermore, an identical store of knowledge can be used in different ways. “The analysis of rationality can begin with the concepts of propositional knowledge and the objective world; but the cases differ in the way in which the knowledge is used. From one perspective the telos inherent in rationality appears to be instrumental mastery, from the other
**communicative understanding** (Habermas 1984:11). Habermas states that one also speaks of 'general presuppositions of communication', but he prefers to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because he takes this type of action aimed at reaching an understanding to be fundamental. Habermas emphasises the need to reach more than an understanding (Verständigung). He states:

The goal of coming to an understanding [Verständigung] is to bring about agreement [Einverständnis] that terminates in the intersubject mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Agreement is based on corresponding recognition of validity claims of comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness. We can see that the word understanding is ambiguous. In its minimal meaning it indicates that two subjects understand a linguistic expression in the same way; its maximal meaning is that between the two there exists an accord concerning the rightness of an utterance in relation to a mutually recognized normative background. In addition, two participants in communication can come to an understanding about something in the world, and they can make their intentions understandable to one another (Habermas 1979: 3, his italics).

The need to reach an understanding seems paramount in comparative terms. However, Habermas also refers to the grey areas of misunderstanding and incomprehension, intentional and involuntary untruthfulness, concealed or open discord - which can occur just as much in first language communications as in second language ones.

In everyday life we start from a background consensus pertaining to those interpretations taken for granted by participants. As soon as consensus is shaken, and the presupposition that certain validity claims are satisfied (or could be vindicated) is suspended, the task of mutual interpretation is to achieve a new definition of the situation which all participants can share (Habermas 1979: 3).
Matters are intensified when communication takes place with speakers with different mother tongues in and different cultural as well as social contexts. Fairclough (1998: 23) from the perspective of critical discourse analysis with its roots in Bernstein's sociolinguistic approach and Critical Theory, maintains the view that there is no external relationship between language and society, but an internal and dialectical relationship. Language is part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena (his italics).

Linguistic phenomena, in Fairclough's view, are social in the sense that whenever people speak or listen or write or read, they do so in ways which are socially determined and have social effects. Even when people are most conscious of their own individuality and think themselves cut off from their social influences, they still use language which is subject to social conventions, social conventions which are embedded in cultural meaning. Critical discourse analysis assumes that through discourse individuals constitute objects of knowledge, situations, and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them. Discursive practice, it is argued, may be effective in transforming, dismantling or even destroying the status quo. On the other hand, through linguistic representations in dialogue "discursive practice may influence the formation of groups and serve to establish or conceal relations of power and dominance between interactants, between social groups and classes, between men and women, between national, ethnic, religious, sexual, political, cultural and subcultural majorities and minorities" (Wodak et.al. 1999: 8).
Many of the issues taken up in the study of sociolinguistics have not remained in isolation. While until the 1960s pure and applied linguistics had restricted its focus on the formal aspects of language and had treated language as a coherent, self-sufficient system, the study of language in relation to society gathered momentum with the works of Fishman (1968, 1971) Stubbs (1984) among others, particularly in the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) to migrants and ethnic minorities where cross-cultural communication difficulties are most marked. Strevens (in Smith 1987: 170) points out that “particularly in ESL/EFL cultural barriers to language communication – shifting, elusive, and variable, yet persistent and intractable – repeatedly diminish the success of learners’ and teachers’ efforts to impart a command of English.”

Cross-cultural communication

Why does language provide such a fascinating object of study? Perhaps because of its unique role in capturing the breadth of human thought and endeavour. We look around us, and we are awed by the variety of several thousands of languages and dialects, expressing a multiplicity of world views, literatures and ways of life. We look back at the thoughts of our predecessors, and we can only see as far as the language lets us see. We look forward in time, and find we can plan only through language (Crystal 1987: 1).

Many people have a great affinity for language. They love and admire the use of language in poetry, literary texts, word games and any other medium which emphasises words and thoughts expressed through language. However, people also readily complain about what they consider to be ‘poor language’ or ‘bad style’ in a subjective manner. Attitudes towards and perceptions of language are,
it seems, complex and elusive; yet “language is important enough to merit the attention of all citizens” (Fairclough 1998: 3).

There are, however, other ways of looking at language. For example what is a language as opposed to a dialect? Both convey not only geographical information but also social information about their speakers. Conceptually dialects refer to a distinct grammar and vocabulary range and possible pronunciation and a regional accent only to pronunciation. Other problems of definition occur where dialects are spoken throughout an area. In the words of Fairclough (1998: 21) a language can be defined as ‘a dialect with an army and a navy’ but there are undercurrents to such a statement. “Modern armies and navies are the features of the nation state and so too is the linguistic unification or standardisation of large politically defined territories which makes the talk of German or English meaningful. When people talk about English in Britain for instance, they generally have in mind British standard English, i.e. the standardised variety of British English.” The decision, therefore, about what constitutes a language is made on grounds of history, economics and politics, usually but not always in relation to national boundaries. For example, speakers of northern Germany cannot understand those in eastern Switzerland though both speak a form of the German language.

It is worth noting that nowadays the German language is however, though to a lesser extent than English, a pluricentric language. German is spoken as a mother tongue by over 94 million people divided among a number of different countries. German has official or quasi official status, in five. Each nation has its own
variety of Standard German with which people identify, as well as regional and local varieties. Clyne (1994:29) develops the concept of *Kommunikationsbund* (communication union), derived from those of *Sprachbund* (linguistic union) in relation to groups of languages influencing one another whether they are genetically related to one another or not, and *Sprechbund* (speech union) when a group of languages share communicative rules – what to say and when and how it is possible to use it in certain situations. The dichotomy between *Sprachbund/Sprechbund*, as inspired by Saussure’s *langue/parole*, he argues, is no longer central to linguistic theory. By employing the term *Kommunikationsbund*, he emphasises the common communicative features of the language/languages concerned. Cultural and linguistic similarities and differences, he argues, cross national boundaries into neighbouring countries or regions. Irrespective of national boundaries and within the concept of language as a form of social practice both, senders and receivers of communications, follow socially, culturally accepted linguistic strategies and conventions of which they may not be aware. After all language is a social process and as such of society and not somehow external to it:

Language is not one of the means by which consciousness is mediated in the world. It does not represent a third instrument alongside the sign and the tool, both of which are distinctly human. Language is by no means simply an instrument, a tool. For it is in the nature of the tool that we master its use, which is to say we take it in hand and lay it aside when it has done its service... Rather, in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always encompassed by the language that is our own. (Gadamer 1976:62)
Learning to speak, according to Gadamer (1976: 63), does not mean using a preexistent tool for designating a world already somehow familiar to us; it means acquiring a familiarity and acquaintance with the world itself and how it confronts us. In other words, familiarity of the world or other cultures can be shared through language, even the other, foreign language but not solely through the other language.

Even in intercultural situations involving monolingual adult education researchers one can assume degrees of background consensus to those interpretations taken for granted by participants. Here I refer to the professional discourse adult educators share on the basis of an assumed mutual understanding of adult learning and teaching in a social context. Adult educators share meaning attached to forms of social phenomena involving adults. Intercultural communication successes and failures occur in many different spoken or written modalities. Culture-specific "ways of speaking", on the other hand, can provoke misunderstanding even prejudices. Germans, for example, use fewer downgraders (please, kind of, I guess) than their English-speaking colleagues. Germans use more upgraders (absolutely, I’m sure, you must understand) which may make them sound more assertive if not aggressive. The French, on the other hand, tend to make requests using the future tense, imperatives and *il faut*, thereby conveying the impression of authoritarianism, impatience and assertiveness. The underlying assumption is that the French have a strong ego (Clyne 1994, 20-21). Gudykunst and Ting Toomey (1988: 100) refer to a series of verbal communication styles such as personal versus contextual, instrumental versus affective and direct versus indirect style and the extent speakers reveal
their intentions through explicit verbal communication. The direct verbal style, for example, refers to verbal messages that embody and invoke speakers’ true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and desires in the discourse process. The indirect verbal style, in contrast, refers to verbal messages that camouflage and conceal speakers’ true intentions in terms of their wants, needs, and goals in the discourse situation. Other factors influence cross-cultural understanding. Morain (in Valdes 1986: 64) refers to non-verbal language, postures and movement, stretching hands, bowing for example, facial expressions, gaze and eye movements, gestures and proximities, such as intimate distance, personal distance, social and public distance – again as well as verbal communication, all of which have a particular role to play in the teaching of foreign languages and acculturation training but potential also in any form cross-cultural programme or study.

Not only the structures of verbal or non-verbal communication patterns vary across various communities and national boundaries but also the academic discourse promoted and employed in education follows distinct cultural traditions. Clyne (1984: 116; 1995: 138) in his discussion of communication patterns, for example, stresses that in German-speaking education systems, essay-writing is far less important than in those of English-language countries, where essays are a major medium of assessment across the curriculum. In German-language countries they are largely language exercises and the formal rules are of far less significance than in English-language countries. Furthermore, in German-language countries content is paramount in expository discourse. Digression from a linear structure is tolerated far more in German-
language countries, as are repetitions. The less linear and less formal structure of
German academic discourse, Clyne maintains, is also evidenced in books and
articles in fields such as linguistics and sociology. 'Digressions' generally fulfil
particular functions in German academic discourse. These enable writers to add
theoretical components in an empirical text, a historical overview, ideological
dimensions, or simply more content, or engage in continuing polemic with
members of the same school. English-speaking scholars, according to Clyne,
tend to use more advance organisers, indicating the path and organisation of the
text and to place them early in the text. As 'digressions' in English texts are
often marked (Let us now digress), a text by an English-speaker will be more
'predictable' than that by a German. In so far as advance organisers occur at all
in German texts, they are often in obscure positions (Clyne 1994: 163). It is
possible to argue that not all English-speaking academics are aware of German
approaches to academic discourse and hence are less tolerant of different cultural
traditions. The content-oriented cultures, that is not only the German-speaking
ones but those of Continental Europe and East/South East Asia, emphasis the
quantity of knowledge provided. Restricting information in the interests of ready
comprehension, for instance, may be quite unacceptable (page 192).

The study of patterns in cross-cultural communication, according to Strevens ( in
Smith 1987: 172) acknowledges that the concept of language itself is a seamless
fabric of the total culture of a society. Furthermore, language mechanisms are partly
non-linguistic; partly para-linguistic and they are subject to individual variability.
More often than not, cross-cultural communication difficulties are cultural rather than
linguistic in nature. Strevens continues to argue that the cultural presuppositions of a
society, when they are transmitted through language, relate especially to the expression of culture through its basic mechanisms and value-systems including domains of philosophy, concepts of nature, notions of government, concepts of science, literature the society’s ultimate myths – all of which have their own multiple sets of dimensions.

There are other dimensions: in anthropology the importance of language has been widely acknowledged throughout the twentieth century. In the words of Stern (1983: 201-203) the study of language constantly demands an interpretation of socially determined meaning, and vice versa, the study of different aspects of culture requires an understanding of verbal aspects of that culture. Linguistics therefore is an important tool in anthropological investigations. The writings of Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1956) were particularly influential in keeping lines open to a wider conception of language in relation to culture, society and the individual. Whorf’s hypothesis rests on the belief that a study of grammatical categories of a language would lead to deep cultural insights and would in turn uncover unconscious predispositions in our own thinking. Though the Whorfian hypothesis has remained somewhat controversial in linguistics and language pedagogy, these studies have been extremely important. “They have led to a widespread conviction that the language learner should not only study the cultural context (language and culture) but he should be made aware of the interaction between language and culture” (Stern 1983: 206).
More recently, Byram (1988, 1994, 1999) and others have promoted methods and approaches to cultural studies in foreign/second language pedagogy. Here the emphasis on authenticity, real life contexts and native speakers of the target language, text books and other media is intended to convey not only factual knowledge about the target country or countries but about also how people in different countries collectively and individually perceive and understand matters in relation to themselves and the rest of the world. The cultural dimension, then, involves knowledge about the target country or countries on the one hand, and on the other reflection and deep-level understanding about values and belief systems other than one’s own. Byram and Risager (1999: 3) refer to three related aspects: first of all, there is the aspect of cultures in general, irrespective of the link with the specific language, of communicative competence which enables a foreign-speaker of a language to understand the ways in which language can be used in a specific sociocultural context and can refer to cultural knowledge and pre-suppositions of specific groups of native-speakers. Second, there is the ability of a foreign speaker to reflect upon his or her own culture, how it appears to outsiders, and how a relationship can be established between it and the culture of others in order to facilitate communication, despite different cultural perspectives. Third, there is the ability of the teacher of foreign languages to mediate between the learners’ cultures, to stimulate learners’ interest in others. The components, he argues, are mutually supportive and integral to the whole.

Cultural awareness, Byram argues, develops out of and parallel with awareness of the sociolinguistic dimension of language study by comparative analysis of, for example, the semantic field of the two languages, and their relationship to cultural meanings.
Thus Byram links language learning to language awareness, cultural awareness and cultural experience, all of them with a comparative focus. Cultural awareness should make learners both ethnographers and informants, allowing them to gain a perspective through comparison which is neither entirely one nor the other. “In the process of comparison from two viewpoints there lies the possibility of attaining an archimedean leverage on both cultures and thereby acquiring new schemata and intercultural competence” (1988:143).

**Interpreting culture**

Raymond Williams (1988:87), not surprisingly, considers the word ‘culture’ to be one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is partly so, he states, because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines, and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought. The dominant European linguistic convention equates the term culture with the idea of civilisation. Both are often used interchangeably. Within German intellectual tradition, the notion of culture is linked to *Kultur*, that is to the creative aesthetic achievements and individual performance, though, as Jenks points out, within the confines of British and American social theory the concept of culture has been understood in a far more pluralistic sense and applied, until relatively recently, on a far more sparing basis (Jenks 1993:10). The German language distinguishes clearly between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. While the former is associated with the creative, artistic and individual, the latter is restricted to more technical
achievements. Hahn (1995: 31) having undertaken dictionary explorations around both concepts, states:

The difference between Kultur and Zivilisation in German usage consists of Kultur being the expression and achievement of the will of a nation/individual in defining the Self, whereas Zivilisation is the totality of technical achievements and its related material comfort.

The strong emphasis on individuality and creativity, Hahn concludes, is also seen in much of German philosophy which has always demonstrated a certain scepticism towards Western positivism. The word Kultur is strongly associated with education and Bildung, often held to be one of Germany’s outstanding features, not only in the positive sense of scholarship and learning, but also, as Hahn (1998: 15) points out, “in the negative connotation of an unpolitical and unwordly attitude. These more negative aspects may have produced a too close and unquestioning relationship with the state and officialdom, at the expense of mature political emancipation.”

In linguistics concepts of culture, taken from the Anglo-American perspective, usually involve knowledge, ideas and artefacts. As such culture may be observable (a behaviourist definition) or related to organised and shared interpretation, that is how individuals make sense of their environment. Goodenough’s definition of culture is widely cited in this context. He states, “A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a natural phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people’s behaviour or emotion. It is the form of things people have in their minds, their models of perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them” (in Hymes 1964:36). Others see
culture as a process of interpretation of symbols and meaning and the interrelationship between meaning, experience and reality (a symbolic definition). In this instance, culture is a dynamic process, ongoing, giving rise to symbols which may be viewed historically. Culture, however, is a seamless, malleable concept not restricted by national boundaries. King (1991: 6) points to shortcomings of any academic paradigm, be it sociology or cultural studies, conceived on the basis of a 'national society'. "With a potentially exponential growth in international migration, with many cultures existing far from their own places of origin and indeed, not necessarily for any length of time... there is no 'nationally grounded' theoretical paradigm which can adequately handle the epistemological situation." It is not just that, increasingly, many people have no roots; it is also that they have no soil. Culture, in King's words, is increasingly deterritorialised. Furthermore, as migration increases and monocultural states become less common, cultural identity becomes more complex, less tied to geographical locations, less static and more individualised. If anything, in times of uncertainties, people adhere to and identify with the familiar, provincial or regional. Wallerstein (in Featherstone 1990: 31), refers to the debate about culture. Culture, he states, is a way of summarizing ways in which groups of people distinguish themselves from other groups. It represents what is shared within in the group and what is not shared, or not entirely shared outside it. He considers it to be a clear and useful concept.

Featherstone (1990: 1) points to cultural integration and cultural disintegration, which take place not only at inter-state level but which transcend the state-society unit and can therefore occur on transnational or transsocietal level. He proposes a new concept, that of 'third cultures', which in themselves are conduits for all sorts of diverse cultural
flows which cannot be merely understood as the product of bilateral exchanges between nation states. "Postmodernism is both a symptom and a powerful cultural image of the swing away from the conceptualisation of a global culture, less in terms of homogenising processes more in terms of the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist and play-back systemicity and order" (Featherstone 1990: 2). Featherstone (1990: 1) states that an integrated global culture is highly unlikely. One cannot think of nation state versus global but of processes. We can point to cultural integration, he argues, and cultural disintegration which takes place not only at inter-state level which transcend the state-society unit and can therefore occur on trans-national or trans-societal level. "It therefore may be possible to point to trans-societal cultural processes which take a variety of forms, some of which have preceded the inter-state into which nation states can be regarded as being embedded, and processes which sustain the exchange and the flow of goods, people, information, knowledge and images which give rise to communication processes which gain some autonomy on a global level." It is therefore misleading to think of global cultures as something which might weaken the sovereignty of nation states, though these may well become integrated into larger global units. Postmodernism is a symptom of the swing away from the conceptualisation of a global culture in terms of the diversity, variety, and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist systemicity and order (Featherstone 1990:2).

Hall (1992) with reference to national cultures, argues that conceptually these cultures are a discourse - a way of constructing meanings which influences and organises both our actions and our conceptions about the nation with which we can identify, an
imagined community. "The discourse of national culture is thus not as modern as it appears. It constructs identities, which are ambiguously placed between the past and the future. It straddles the temptation to return to former glories and the drive to go ever further into modernity" (Hall in Hall, Held, McGrew 1992: 295). A nation is a system of cultural representation and a national culture is a discourse. Theories of representation, which might help clarify these points, distinguish between the reflective approach, in which language functions like a mirror to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world; the intentional approach, where as individuals we use language to convey meaning or to communicate things which are special and unique to us; and the constructivist approach in which meaning and language operate through symbolic practices and processes. "It is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts" (Hall 1997: 25). The relationship between language, knowledge and culture is a complex one. After all, language must mean something, in the sense of mental representation. In other words, representation is the production of meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. As Hall (1997: 24) explains, the main point is that meaning does not inhere in things, in the world. It is constructed, produced. It is the result of a signifying practice - a practice that produced meaning, that makes things mean. Meanings, however, are culturally moulded. Meanings change, adapt or fade away in the course of time and from one location to another. In the constructivist sense, there is a social, public aspect to language. Things carry no meaning in themselves. People construct meaning - using representational systems - concepts and signs, within the context of their own cultural environment. However, paradigms of culture pose a multitude of questions yet offer few answers. Their interpretation rests on one's own understanding and perception of a given context or situation. Cultural understanding is therefore not
readily transferable from one country to another or one community to another, particularly if language barriers intervene.

**Culture and intellectual traditions**

Schriewer and Keiner (1992: 25) in their comparative study on culture and intellectual traditions in educational sciences refer to different national contexts as these emerge at different periods in time, and under specific social situations, and in accordance with distinctive intellectual traditions. These hold particularly true, they state, for fields of study closely related to given social practices and their prevailing cultural and political milieux such as education. They quite naturally invite comparative analysis of different national patterns of development in a given field of academic knowledge. In Germany, their study confirms, the reflective style of theorizing characteristic of the human studies or *Geisteswissenschaften* has profoundly marked education as an academic subject. The German faculties of philosophy were most powerful involving the amalgamation of philosophical reasoning, historical erudition and normative hermeneutics. In France, on the other hand, this culture of academic reasoning was met with insurmountable scepticism. In the interwar years the science of education in France crossed disciplinary boundaries into ethics, sociology and psychology. Nowadays, Schriewer and Keiner explain, the French approach to the science of education is much more a multi-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary study than in Germany. The authors conclude that one may conclude that French and German educationists, for the foreseeable future, will continue to transform, along the lines of the divergent intellectual spheres of reference, the common object domain of education into differently shaped subject matters of study. German approaches to education and
academia in the Humboldt tradition have influenced numerous universities across the globe. Altbach (1998: 58) in his study on higher education, for example, notes the profound impact of Western academic culture had on Asian universities. The English tradition of collegiate education for an elite, as well the more egalitarian Scottish model were influential in the large number of countries formerly under British colonial rule. The other major Western academic model, he notes, is that of the nineteenth century German university. The idea that research is a key element in higher education was stressed by Humboldt, according to Altbach, the most important German thinker on higher education. German academic traditions were influential in Eastern Europe but also in the United States, Japan and China and German ideas of higher education proved to be extraordinarily powerful (Altbach 1998: 59).

In order to develop an understanding of differences between the Anglo-American and the German culture expressed in education as well as adult education, it seems necessary to refer back to Luther and other religious conflicts of the sixteenth century. Hahn (1995: 28) refers to the impact of Luther’s translation of the Bible which rapidly came to occupy a central role in the evolution of German literature and thought. The translation served to limit the authority of Rome and, at the same time, made the ‘word of God’ accessible to a wider part of the lay movement. Luther himself was profoundly influenced by Augustinian philosophy, mysticism, and a highly individualised and emotional form of religion dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries. It may well be, Hahn argues, that this mystical, irrational aspect of German Protestantism affected the Lutheran attitude towards work and worldly matters.
Luther's understanding of *Beruf* (calling rather than occupation or job) "goes some way to explain, why Luther's form of protestantism failed to promote capitalism, discounting any form of predestination and with the need for self-realisation by focusing instead on divine grade and personal fulfilment" (Hahn 1995: 29-31). *Arbeit* (work) is not measured by material success, as advocated by Calvin, but it must be seen as a means towards self-fulfilment in its own right. To put it somewhat simply: Luther defines work in terms of duty towards God, while for Calvin personal gain and prosperity are seen in a positive light as assurance of individual salvation. "Its mystical nature sustained a form of individualism which turned inward, became sentimentalised and spiritualised the world" (page 30). Personal religiosity turned towards philosophy and literature, while excluding the public sphere of politics which was surrendered to the authority of the states. Thus, according to Hahn, the German Lutheran movement relied on absolutist princes in the various territorial states. Any form of rebellion against the government of the day were considered a sinful misuse of power.

With reference to the history of German adult education, Kanz (in Pöggeler 1975: 20) discusses Luther's lack of concern for vocationally-oriented learning and everyday pressing social issues. Instead, Luther welcomed education from a theological perspective in relation to language and reflection of bible texts only. Adults remained children of God, sentiments which Kanz relates to a radical disempowering of human beings. In contrast, Calvinism in its Western European strongholds, particularly in the Netherlands, England and France, found itself in collision with absolutist state power. Calvanistic Methodists Societies in Wales and thereafter in England with "courage, enthusiasm and emotional appeal" made a tremendous impact, particularly on adult
education and the working classes in the mining areas in England and Wales (Kelly: 1992: 70). God and the World in Calvinistic teaching of the time were one and the same. There was no private sphere. The church had the universal claim to educate the people. Kanz (in Pöggeler 1975:21) refers to a Christian police state in which by coercion adults had to conform to a particular way of living, one which permitted no tolerance or exceptions. The education of adults in its widest sense was closely interlinked with the teaching of the universal church. Calvinism, therefore, came to accept the right of resistance to despotic regimes and embraced the developing ideas of human rights.

Weber (1968: 102) in his explorations of The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism refers to Luther’s sense of the religious experience and Calvin’s logical necessity of his thought. Weber writes:

> In the place of the humble sinners to whom Luther promises grace if they trust themselves to God in penitent faith are bred those self-confident saints whom we can rediscover in the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism and in isolated instances to the present. On the other hand, in order to attain that self-confidence intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace (Weber [1904-05] 1968:112).

One wonders how many Anglo-Saxons identify with those self-confident saints or think of their forefathers as hard puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism? Undoubtedly, the Anglo-Saxon sense of pragmatism is often compared with perceived German earnestness. Hahn speculates that the stereotypically perceived lack of German sense of humour and a serious approach to art and culture may well stem from this German Protestant brand of
piety (Hahn 1995: 31-32). More seriously though, there is a sense in many
people's mind that Germans are somewhat different from people in most other
countries. Historians have attempted to develop the thesis of the German
Sonderweg (special path way) in their attempt to trace German characteristics
during the nineteenth and twentieth century which might have led to the
Holocaust during the Nazi period (Grebing 1986 among others), thereby
differentiating between Germany and other European countries. Without wishing
to enter the somewhat controversial debate it is pointless to deny the German
distinctiveness attached to this period in time.

With reference to Great Britain during the seventeenth century Kelly (1992: 47-48)
refers to the popular interest in scientific investigations and Francis Bacon who
emphasised the need for a systematic and comprehensive survey of the whole field of
knowledge and for the use of inductive methods based on observation and experiment.
Christopher Wren and Isaac Newton and others together with members of the newly
created Royal Society endeavoured to promote 'mutual converse' and 'experimental
philosophy'. In the context of history, the arts, and philosophy, however, German
romanticism and idealism – as opposed to French rationalism and English pragmatism
or scientific inquiry – are frequently mentioned. In German history the intellectual
movement Deutsche Bewegung (the German movement), that is the time of the
Klassizismus, Idealismus and Romantik, is the period towards the end of the
eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. The term Klassizismus is used
with reference to literature, Idealismus to aspects of German philosophy and
Romantik to the consequences of this particular period. It is one which is also
significant for the history of education and adult education in Germany.
literature flourished with works by Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin among others and in philosophy with those of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling – many of whom were influenced by the Earl of Shaftsbury’s concepts of ‘common sense’ and ‘self-formation’ and Rousseau’s philosophy of education in relation to society in particular. The contemporaries of Humboldt and Goethe, were less concerned with aspects of work in relation to self-realization but with man’s perfectibility as an ideal sphere (Hahn 1998: 3).

Marriott (1995: 3-4) describes how early in the nineteenth century Coleridge and Carlyle turned to transcendental philosophy for a conception of the state and social being set against the fragmented individualism and banality of industrial revolution. He states that their followers looked to German intellectual seriousness for guidance in intellectual matters and ideas in education. The example of German scientific organisation and research was to prove of great significance to the debates on how to modernise and expand university and college education in England. However, during the first half of the nineteenth century England acquired the status of an unavoidable point of reference for progressive thinkers in Germany. Anglophile historians referred to certain traditions of political self-government, political wisdom and flexibility unavailable to the managers of centralised bureaucratic German states.

If there was special reservation, it was to do with the fixation of the dominant English political culture on individualism, economic liberalism and the rights of prosperity, all of which stood in the way of fully rational responses to social ills (Marriott 1995: 3).

This period gave birth to the Bildungsgedanken (Meyer in Poeggeler 1975: 31) which was linked passionately to the ideal of mankind. Human beings should be free and
equal in the sense of human brotherhood. These ideals were linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie, freemasonry, and the emancipation of the individual. Humanity and Allgemeine Bildung (general education) are intrinsically linked to these ideals with a firm belief in of the individual and the personal together with a sense of duty and morality which demand respect for each other and society as a whole. The understanding of having to become educated and to educate oneself are therefore significant in the history of German education and adult education. Gadamer (1965: 7) relates the word Bildung to the mystics of the baroque and the individual’s the aim to strive for inner spiritualism in the image of God – das Bild in German means picture or image- and, therefore, to something higher and deeper than the formation of talents and wealth, unlike the word ‘form’ or ‘formation’ widely used in other languages, including English. The word Bildung, therefore, refers to an ongoing process which is reflected in terms such as Fort- or Weiterbildung (further or continuing education) so widely used in the later half of the twentieth century. Bildung ist ein echter geschichtlicher Begriff, und gerade um diesen geschichtlichen Character der ‘Aufbewahrung’ geht es für das Verständnis der Geisteswissenschaften (Gadamer 1965:9). (Bildung is a genuine historical concept, and it concerns precisely this historical character of preservation needed for the understanding of the humanities and the arts.)

In the context of comparative studies the role of language and the study of key concepts and words in their etymological development offer significant help towards the mediation of meaning and understanding. As Jütte (1992: 47) with reference to translation and comparative research points out, the ideal one-to-one equivalent is rarely achievable. He points to the tension which exists between the target language
and the mother tongue, which is rarely eased. Rather than seeking a linguistic equivalent the translator or interpreter needs to concentrate on context and meaningful content of what is to be translated. Translations ought to be considered as a sound testing instrument within research paradigms, that is, they should stress differences as well as similarities and that these must be transferable from one cultural context to another. The translator therefore should have not only the required linguistic skills but also the appropriate subject knowledge. Translation theory in linguistics, having moved from a science-based, structuralist approach (Catford 1965) to an increasingly historical-relative and sociocultural one, is not only concerned with words and structures but also with the macro-context in which they are embedded. Indeed, translation studies, having gained from the findings in linguistics and studies of language learning may make translation one of the most interesting cognitive activities undertaken in the realm of language (Anderman, Rogers 1996: 13).

Translation techniques together with communication patterns affect comparative studies though their significance is rarely realised.

**Conclusion and further questions**

Notions of cultural differences across a broad spectrum of human activities can also be used to place boundaries in the sense of opposites, as I argued in chapter 5 in relation to similarities and differences, key concepts in comparative studies. In chapter 4, I also referred to the most common use of culture in adult education which occurs in the context of multiculturalism or ideas of a power struggle and equal opportunities. One can argue, Hofmann (1999: 478) states, that most comparative education research has not delved deeply or sufficiently critically into the underlying
assumptions framing key concepts in multicultural discourse such as diversity and identity". With reference to culture in comparative education, she asserts: "While comparative education has been increasingly receptive to ideas of culture in the framing of its theory and research, the field lacks engagement with central theoretical debates surrounding culture that have been ongoing in anthropology for some time"(page 464). Issues of culture, she argues, have remained peripheral in the conceptualization of problems, research paradigms, and in the development of comparative studies. Hoffman suggests that comparative education might benefit from a deeper critical engagement with ideas of culture. Hitherto, culture has been seen in terms of cultural diversity. This is, she argues, is a limited view. The understanding of culture challenges notions of 'otherness' and of identity in relation to the self. Individuals within cultural groups have identities which are determined by their social roles and 'memberships' to various collectivities. In terms of adult education one might see social roles within the context of professionalism and membership of collectivities demonstrated by the numerous professional groupings or networks which extend well beyond national boundaries (see chapter 5). Hoffman writes: "The first major point of concern is whether invoking a concept of culture automatically leads to an unwarranted abstraction or generalizations about social life that are at odds with the realities of individual lives, diversity, inconsistency and change." In this sense concepts of culture become suspect because it is not simply an overriding force which determines how people behave, think and feel. There is nothing inherent in the concept that makes boundaries, consistency, stasis, universal sharing, and so forth, inevitable (Hoffman 1999: 466).
One might add that all phenomena originate in a particular place and time in history which add richness and depth to any comparative study. It is difficult to see how such studies can be undertaken, even by positivists, without reference to cultural attributes which makes the whole exercise meaningful not only to the researcher but also the his or her academic community. Admittedly, issues of knowledge in relation to one language or more, just as those relating to cultural understanding, are elusive, not easily quantified, and hence difficult to accommodate in research methods and approaches. Nevertheless, they underpin almost every research design or comparative undertaking involving two or more cultural communities. There is a danger in all these discussions, though, that they remain theoretical with little apparent application to the pragmatic world faced by those actually undertaking comparative studies. These I issues I aim to explore in relation to Germany and Britain in the following chapter.
Chapter 7

*Lifelong learning or lebenslanges Lernen: comparative investigations*

Change is inevitable. In a progressive country, change is constant.

Benjamin Disraeli (1867)

In chapter 2 I referred to the study of hermeneutics and the interpretation of texts, theories which maintain that any social phenomenon must be understood in its historical and cultural context. Marriott (1995) in his study on Anglo-German relations writes that he had ‘observed figures from the past making comparisons’. In this sense, as documentation of encounter and reception, his study was a kind of ‘second-order’ study of the work of practical comparativists from the past (Marriott 1995:viii) – it itself in interesting way of researching comparative studies. However, “Why ‘compare’ societies if at all findings are culturally unique and therefore ungeneralizable? asks Epstein (in Schriewer and Holmes 1992: 8) with reference to cultural relativism. Epstein maintains the argument that positivism and cultural relativism are “manifest wholly disparate ideas about comparison and the proper study of education. Positivist scholars examine invariant relationships that transcend boundaries of particular societies. Relativists focus on the particularities of cultures as these are linked to the idiosyncrasies of national systems of education.” Cultural relativism (mentioned in chapter 3), regarded as incompatible with positivism, was at one time considered to be a viable alternative approach. It is based in the truism that every educational system is derived from the cultural context in which it exists. Only by seeing the uniqueness in the way other countries deliver education
can one genuinely appreciate the distinctiveness of education at home. These debates refer to Mallison (1975) and the assumption of national character (mentioned in chapter 4) and the assumption of relatively permanent attitudes which shape particular social, geographical, historical, political and religious factors (Halls in Edwards, Holmes, van de Graaf 1973:120). However, permanency is not one of the characteristics which defines contemporary views on globalisation and postmodernity. As previously pointed out there is nothing inherent in the concept of culture that makes boundaries, consistency and so forth, inevitable (Hoffman 1999:466).

Cultural differences, however, have, at least at times, practical everyday dimensions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, the 1919 Smith Report talks of German and British education in terms of national characteristics. The Germans “showed what formidable strengths can be produced by universal scientific systematic instruction” and that the “German machine left lacking of individual initiative, of varied forms of development” while implying that British educational qualities are expressed in terms of “buoyancy of spirit” and “voluntary, self-organising activities of a free people”. Nevertheless, the same passage also refers to “lessons taught by the enemy” and the need to learn from one another (in Wiltshire, Taylor and Jennings 1980: 1). Green (1997: 76) points to Britain’s late development of school education and the apparent failure in vocational education and training, issues at the heart of the Smith Report, one of the legacies of the Industrial Revolution, and the inevitable consequence of a laissez-faire philosophy that discouraged state intervention in anything except where unavoidable. Green (page 96) traces this typically English attitude towards education to the early achievements of the British Empire and its insular geography, and the ability since the Norman conquest to avoid invasion.
Prussia under Frederick the Great and Austria under Maria Theresa, on the other hand, pioneered national and public education systems during the 1830s and 1840s. Other European states soon followed while in England a national system of secondary education was not introduced until 1902.

Towards the end of the same century such national and cultural differences seem much less apparent. Both Germany and England are engulfed by economic globalisation, rapid technological developments and computer-mediated information explosion referred to in previous chapters. In the politics of education both countries use the rhetoric of ‘learning societies’, ‘learning relationships’ ‘learning culture’ and ‘lifelong learning’ as expressed in the European White Paper of 1995, Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society. As Künzel (1996b: 86) points out, sometimes terms are coined faster than they are understood and blueprints circulated before the demand arises. “Standardising language to make it universally understandable may be useful on a diplomatic level to forge international consensus,” he argues, “but is hardly conducive to lending it substance.” It is in its substance, however, that at least some cultural differences can emerge.

The need for social agents to provide a flexible learning environment, one which accommodates rapid economic and technological changes, and for individuals to commit themselves to principles of lifelong learning has been widely referred to by supra-national organisations such as OECD, UNESCO and the EU. Measures to initiate education and training policies under the banner of lifelong learning have been part of political agendas in member states of the EU for quite some time now. Indeed, as Hake points out, during the 1990s lifelong learning has emerged as one of the
'hottest' topics in public debate about the organisation of education and training in the twenty-first century (Hake 1999: 54). In the context of the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996, which was intended to raise awareness and stimulate actions in the various member states of the EU, Britain and Germany in common with other member state countries, promoted a series of action programmes which served, at least in part, distinct political agendas and cultural contexts. I shall refer to some of these in the course of this chapter.

**Lifelong learning**

It would be imprudent to state that we are dealing with new phenomena. Adults have learnt throughout life in all societies and in all periods of time. Indeed, secular learning and teaching was part of the Enlightenment project mentioned in the previous chapter. The need to learn throughout life is also referred to in the 1919 Smith Report which states that adult education is “a permanent national necessity” and that it therefore should be “both universal and lifelong” (in Wiltshire, Taylor and Jennings 1980:5). The idea, or ideal, of lifelong education and/or lifelong learning as a key concept in adult education was adopted by UNESCO in 1970 (Fauré et al. 1972; Lengrad 1989). As such the term refers to a rejection of a front-end model of education. Instead, education is portrayed as being available throughout life, as needed and desired by everyone. Tight (1996: 35) refers to Dewey, Lindeman and Yeaxlee in this context. Cropley (1980:2) distinguishes lifelong learning from lifelong education by stating that lifelong learning is not restricted to the kind of learning which takes place in schools. In the British context the term lifelong learning together
with continuing education reflects most closely policy changes that have taken place in recent years.

Jarvis (1999: 250) with reference to learning and teaching, finds that these terms, far from being synonymous, have profound implications for those educational institutions which place a great deal of emphasis upon teaching. Teaching, he argues, assumes that there are truths to be taught and then learned. It is not surprising, Jarvis continues, that in the West the first major educational institution was the church – which in turn calls into question the matter of truth and how truth is discovered and knowledge legitimised. Arguably, however, it is not so much about what adult educators might want to teach. The reality of lifelong learning is one which adult educators have to accommodate within their own professional situations. Jarvis (1999: 256) concludes that the global trends in adult learning are many and complex – but one above all can be seen within the pragmatism of late modern society: no educational form or institution is sacrosanct. As Griffin (1999: 432) points out, a suspicion remains that governments may no longer be prepared to fund education and place at least some of the burden onto the individual.

In the German language no distinction is made between lifelong education and lifelong learning. Linguistically, the term *lebenslange Bildung*, even if it did exist, would be meaningless. Furthermore, the term *lebenslang* (lifelong) is less acceptable in the professional context since it reminds one of lifelong schooling or sentencing in the penal system. Instead *lebensbegleitendes Lernen* (life accompanying learning), occasionally referred in English as ‘life time learning’, is deemed more appropriate though there is little consistency in much of the German adult education literature.
Knoll (1996c: 8) finds that the term of lifelong learning, though occasionally used, has had little impact in the German context where it is simply seen as a continuum from school to adult education, a point confirmed by Wittpith (1999: 5).

Nuissl (1997:43) notes that since 1996, the Year of Lifelong Learning, a shift of emphasis in the interpretation of lifelong learning has taken place in Germany – away from educators and institutions to the individual, the ‘self’ who is responsible for his or her actions and hence learning and, by implication, its financing. According to Nuissl, the term implies that learning should no longer be regarded as something in addition to work and home but as an integral part of both. The concept of *die Wende zum Selbst* (turn to the self) is used in this context. It is a rejection of a front-end model of education with teacher-centred deductive, knowledge-based modes of teaching. Instead, individuals have choices and also decisions to make. It is the role of educators to help them make these decisions. Implicit is an acceptance that traditional roles of institutions and teachers involved in adult education have to be transformed by offering, with the help of electronic media, a variety of flexible learning opportunities. There is a new emphasis on facilitation and educational guidance, all issues familiar to those in British adult continuing education. However, as Wittpith (1999: 15) points out, such issues are dependent, at least partly, on party-political ideology and circumstances. The (conservative) CDU, CSU and (liberal) FDP parties, coalition partners of the government in 1996, promote individual responsibility, and economic viability as opposed to institutional dependency and government support. There is, after all, a domestic side to attached to notions of lifelong learning with practical implications for structural change in institutions and in behavioural terms for individuals who become “the centre of intentionality” (Künzel 1996b: 87).
Dohmen (1996: 2) in this context refers to a range of German social issues he perceives them: the environment being destroyed, competition becoming increasingly globalised, wage levels and living standards under pressure, an ageing population, corruption, violence, and crime which continue to spread, a public sector which is crippled by debt crises, the limits of the welfare systems and structural unemployment which threatens domestic stability. "Lamentations, visions of decline, scepticism, and resignation are of no use," Dohmen writes. "What we need is creative thinking, innovative energy and the courage to move forward with new approaches to human progress that will ensure our future.

In the context of the 1996 Year of Lifelong Learning the German government initiated a number of projects within the policy framework which concentrated on:

- a move to broad competence-based vocationally-oriented continuing education;
- an overall educational policy-framework for lifelong learning.

(Dohmen 1997: 21)

Projects supported by the EU funds covered areas such as foreign languages, quality assurance, integration of general and vocational education, continuing education for the disadvantaged, gender and age-related education, information technology, key skills, professional development, continuing education in higher education, flexibility and mobility in continuing education, European-competence through action programmes. Underlying themes concentrated on the promotion and development of new skills, closer co-operation between schools and employers, skills in at least three EU languages, the necessity to foster self-directed and self-organised learning,
competency-based learning as well as the enhancement of transferable skills, creativity and innovative actions (Krug 1997: 58). The government also organised a major conference in 1996 with the title "Zukunftsforum Kompetenzentwicklung" thereby initiating discussion around the need to develop a competence-based framework for vocational education and training and continuing education which would need to involve all sectors in education including initial education, formal and informal education involving public and private organisations, reminiscent of competence-based accreditation activities in Britain. A second major national conference was organised with the aim to develop an overall framework for education policies under the heading 'lifelong learning for all'. The conference tackled, in the main, the practical and theoretical implications of self-directed learning and independent study – all familiar topics to adult educators in the UK. Other initiatives included the launch of a competition for innovative projects concerning new technology such as the development of new materials or production processes, the exploration of world-wide knowledge and information in vocational training and continuing education, diagnosis and research into molecular medicine, mobility in urban developments (BMBF, 19/11/1996). In 1998 the prize-winning continuing education projects included a multi-media 'virtual' Fachhochschule (technical university), a lifelong learning project involving computer-mediated flexible learning among others. In addition, the German government developed a major initiative to link schools to the Internet Schulen ans Netz; a similar project was launched to link higher education institutions (BMBF 5/6/1998). In 1998 another national competition was launched within the context of lifelong learning: a week-long learning festival with the slogan Gestalten, Entfalten, Weiterbilden (create, develop, and continue learning) similar to the Adult Learning Week first initiated by NIACE in 1992.
'Widening participation' or concern for young unqualified people, one of the key issues in Britain, does not seem to have the same priority in Germany. On the contrary: the German government states that in the year 1994 about 42 per cent of its citizens ranging in age from 19 to 64 took part in continuing education initiatives, and that almost 75 per cent of young people considered continuing education throughout life to be very important (BMBF 20/03/1997).

In the German context the emphasis in most of these initiatives centres around the development and enhancement of technical computer-mediated skills, networking, innovation, and the development of self-directed learning in further, higher and continuing education. Issues which seem particularly important to those in traditional forms of adult education centre on *selbstgesteuertes Lernen* (self-directed learning) and the need for educational providers to offer individualised flexible services (Ebben in conversation 1998). Such reforms must not be determined by top-down processes but developed from the grass roots through the education processes (Hirsch in Nacke, Dohmen 1996:134-135). It is a theme developed by Dohmen (1996, 1997). It is also highlighted in the DIE Annual Report of 1996 (page 70) and 1997 (page 74) and developed in a number of projects involving both DIE and other organisations. The conceptual and theoretical understanding of *selbstgesteuertes Lernen*, however, is not a ‘homegrown product’ in either England or Germany. On the contrary. Reischmann (1997) refers to American literature and theories developed by Tough, Knowles, Brookfield, Candy, Hiemstra and Brockett among others in this context, all long familiar to British adult education and hence manifestations of ‘cultural borrowing’ in comparative terms.
In German adult education literature, perhaps more so than in the British, there is much emphasis on changes in working patterns and trends towards shift work, weekend work, short-term contracts and flexi-time and overtime arrangements, referred to by Beck as destandardisation of labour (1992:139). All these factors, it is argued, compel adult educators to develop and accept different models of learning provision. It is stressed that flexi-time arrangements are offered by an increasing number of employers, 14% in 1987 and 28% in 1995. Working on Sundays has risen in West Germany from 10% in 1987 to 15% in 1995. Since then working overtime has also risen to an average of 3.5 hours per week (Gross in Nahrstedt, Brinkmann, and Kadel 1997: 17). The controversy surrounding the German laws on Ladenschluss is perhaps indicative. Viewed from abroad, particularly from the UK context, the debate on the extension to shopping hours which took place in German parliament, press and public during 1996, seems difficult to understand. As Halsall (1997: 220) confirms, “What appeared, from an outsider’s point of view, a relatively trivial proposal, namely the adjustment to shopping hours, extending them by one and a half hours on weekdays and enabling shops to stay open until 4pm on Saturdays, generated a level of controversy and debate within Germany which seemed scarcely comprehensible.” Ladenschluss attained an almost symbolic or weltanschauliche dimension. In 1986 in Britain, on the other, the question of whether there should be a general liberalisation of the laws was never in doubt, just how this could be made compatible with Sunday observance. The reform in Britain was consumer-led in the sense of an already existing situation, while in Germany public opinion was not as overwhelmingly in favour (Halsall 1997:225). The practical implication of self-directed learning and lifelong learning in German society, though not nearly as controversial as shopping, is at yet difficult to assess. Gross (in Nahrstedt, Brinkmann and Kadel 1997: 17)
questions such concepts. Lifelong learning is an unstructured and process-related concept. Learners (like shoppers) are conditioned by past experiences in school and in vocational training to accept models of structured time and tuition, though German adult education literature cites numerous examples of both public and private sector self-directed learning programmes (see, for example, Report 39). It would be difficult to assert within the limitations of this study that German adult education was ‘lagging behind’ Britain, though these impressions are easily gained when viewed from the position of the outsider.

In the UK the European Year of Lifelong Learning was welcomed across the spectrum of public debate (Tuckett 1997: 8). Here the priorities were:

- Adults in work
- Higher education
- Information, advice and guidance
- Adult education
- Young people between the ages of 14 and 19 preparing for work.

All of these priorities are culturally and socially determined and in many ways specific to the UK. European Year projects in the UK illustrate the range of activities undertaken. They show, as Tuckett (1997: 18) confirms, the complexity of learning routes adopted by adults, and the scale of challenges facing the country. Projects developed in the context of the 1996 year include some by large national bodies and by providers working in specific local communities; some projects were aimed to target excluded groups of learners, others promoted language learning or the
achievements of existing learners. One project, for example, involved a Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the promotion of learning through the workplace, another action research project was aimed at shift workers, and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) used the Year to launch a major focus on ‘bargaining for skills’.

Tuckett states that perhaps the highlight of the Year in the UK was Adult Learners’ Week. More than 10,000 people phoned the free telephone helpline run during that week and some 40 per cent of them found their way to courses as a result. Connected with the Adult Learners’ were 5,000 local events, national conferences, and almost 800 press articles and all the major television channels covered the event (1997: 20).

In Britain the implications for lifelong or life time adult education are embedded in notions of a learning society, central to the economic well-being of the country, an increasing global economy, and economic advantage for societies with skilled, adaptable and learning workforces (Tuckett 1997:1). In common with Germany, economic competitiveness of global dimensions, technological change, the need for individuals to acquire high level skills, new information and communication technologies increasingly determine, it seems, mission and output of adult education. Most people, it is argued, recognise the challenges. However, in British educational politics there is a marked concern for young people preparing for work not apparent in Germany to the same extent. This concern expressed in the 1998 Green Paper The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain. The Paper, while expressing optimism and a sense of success in terms of lifelong learning, points to weaknesses in the performance of basic and intermediate skills – one of the key concerns of the current government’s educational policies (DfEE 1998a). Almost 30 per cent of young people fail to reach NVQ level 2 by the age of 19; seven million adults have no formal
qualifications at all and more than one in five of all adults have poor literacy skills. It is not surprising that the concept of widening participation underpins many policies and initiatives of educational agendas. "We must bridge the 'learning divide' - between those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not - which blights so many communities and widens income inequality. The results are seen in the second and third generation of the same family being unemployed, and in the potential talent of young people wasted in a vicious circle of under-achievement, self-deprecation, and petty crime. Learning can overcome this by building self-confidence and independence" (Green Paper, Section 2.13). Yet, as the Kennedy Report (1997:19) states, despite increases in participation, achieving the national targets is still an enormous challenge. The urgency is of the task is plain. The United Kingdom and its partners are not standing still. Widening participation is also a key theme in the 1997 Dearing Report Higher Education in the learning society. In higher education, there remain groups in the population who are under-represented, notably those from socio-economic groups III to V, people with disabilities and specific ethnic minority groups. The Report (Dearing 1997:29.) recommends that funding should be made available, which indeed it has now, to institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation - the Open University is such an example. Adult participation in higher education, too, has grown by around 60 per cent in the last ten years. But one in ten young people reach school leaving age with no qualification at all (DfEE 1999).

From the German perspective one point seems particularly noteworthy: it is linked to direct government intervention which has shaped and turned upside-down almost every aspect of adult continuing education over the last few years - one just has to
remember the 1988 and 1992 Education Acts - and the numerous policy statements made by the now socialist government since 1997. The attention on educational agendas in Britain, it seems, focuses largely on English (rather than Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish) initiatives, hence the importance of the Green and White Papers, which in the more complex federal structure of Germany’s education system are less apparent at national level. In the context of 1996 and Lifelong Learning, the difference of emphasis seems striking, particularly when looking at both the DIE 1996 (calendar year) and the NIACE 1996-97 (academic year) Annual Reports. Both refer to the various activities which took place during that year. The 1996 DIE report confirms that in the context of lifelong learning new themes had been explored in relation to, for example, multi-media learning, media competencies, quality assurance in the management of adult education and issues in relation to independent learning.

However, the 1996-97 NIACE report notes that all major political parties had produced policy papers on lifelong or life time learning. NIACE’s wide brief and role of advocacy, barely noticeable in the DIE report, is particularly marked in its 1997/1998 Annual Report, the year of the general election and a new government. “Has there ever been a year like it?” asks its opening statement on the year in view.

Political references abound. The statement refers to the change of government, and the newly established National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, to both the Kennedy and the Dearing Reports, the English Green Paper The Learning Age (published 1998) as well as the New Deal Programme with incentives and guidance support for young and older unwaged adults into employment – all government-led initiatives affecting adult learners in one way or another. Not only that, NIACE with reference to a change in government takes a political stance: “The first, and welcome development, is that partnership is back in fashion” (Tuckett,
page 6. With reference to the Kennedy Report, for example, NIACE states that progress in adopting recommendations made is painfully slow. With regard to Dearing NIACE expresses concern that the proposed model for expansion might ossify opportunities for adults since he rejected any move to harmonise support for part-time overwhelmingly adult learners with that offered to full-time students. Few of the issues are taken up in the report Hochschulen für das 21. Jahrhundert, first circulated in 1996 in the form of an anonymous paper in order to test reactions to the non-binding content of the paper, part of the attempt to regulate and decentralise higher education (Keller 1997:67). While the Dearing Report Higher Education for the 21st Century in England, stresses visions of a learning society, committed to learning throughout life and the need to widen participation, the German report centres around higher education practices and the need for institutional reform. The average length of undergraduate study, the German report states, amounts to 7.1 years in the universities and 5 years in the Fachhochschulen – one of the key issues in higher education. Most undergraduates ‘job’ to support themselves and, frequently, their families. In 1992, for example, the average age for those who achieved graduate status, was 28.2 years (Wittpohl 1999:23). Furthermore, the report considers a 25 per cent student dropout rate too high. The British model of higher education with ‘bachelor’, 'master' and PhD degrees is praised as is the Anglo-Saxon credit transfer system in higher education. Germany has a mass higher education system which is in philosophy and organisation still rooted in the Humboldt traditions. In order to become more attractive and relevant to contemporary society it is recommended that higher education should become less centralised, and more deregulated and financially independent, along British lines. German universities should be able to have a say in the admission and selection of students, which is currently a centralised
task. By contrast, Taylor (1999: 37) is critical of admission procedures in England and Wales where, as he states, much of the admission work is done by departmental staff. In many institutions the pressure to fill places and to secure student-linked funding leads to places being offered to applicants who lack the necessary learning skills to benefit from those courses. Yet in England and Wales there is no widespread support for proposals which would seek to lay down rational criteria for HE admissions (ibid.)

In the German higher education report reference is made to non-traditional entry - a topic of concern to all those involved in adult continuing education in Britain and often a cause for mutual misunderstanding. The report recommends, "Öffnung des Hochschulzugangs für beruflich Qualifizierte ohne herkömmliche Hochschulzugangsberechtigung (Teil III, A) (opening of admission for those vocationally qualified and who have not obtained conventional entry qualification) (BMBF 1999). The key difference here from the British access system is the emphasis on appropriate vocational education and training prior to admission, an apprenticeship, for example, which might be equated with the more conventional Abitur. In Germany routes of the zweite Bildungsweg (second chance education) via evening classes are not part of the educational or political agenda. In practice such routes are laden with obstacles. Unlike in Britain, regulations governing alternative entry to higher education are prescribed by the Land (state) rather than by universities. Given that there are sixteen states, it is not surprising that these differ in each state, and that they are highly complex and tightly controlled (Davies 1996, Wittpoth 1999). German Volkshochschulen (adult education institutes) offer courses which lead to school leaving certificates and thereby access into further and higher education, yet in statistical terms, the number of courses offered is low. In 1997, for example, in the
state Northrhine-Westphalia there were 27,684 foreign language courses and only 
1,436 which prepared adults for school leaving certificates (DIE 1997b). In practice, 
therefore, while having gained the Abitur individuals have the right to enter higher 
education, without Abitur university education remains closed for most (though it is 
possible to enter a Fachhochschule provided applicants have achieved the equivalence 
of good GCSEs and completed an appropriate apprenticeship or equivalent). Davies 
(1996:114) points out that, in terms of access, while the British system permits 
radicalims and innovation by committed individuals, departments and institutions it 
also enables deeply rooted cultural attitudes to reinforce conservatism and elitism. In 
Germany there is emphasis on neither.

A point is worth noting which is pertinent to discussions on access and higher 
education is that, unlike in Britain, the German education system is highly structured 
and geared towards Abschluss (completion) rather than access in the British sense, 
particularly in the context of school education and vocational training, though, 
paradoxically, not higher education as is the case in Britain. It is not surprising that 
Weiterbildung (continuing education) is referred to as the fourth ‘pillar’ of education, 
with school, further and higher education as the first three. The Deutsche Bildungsrat 
(Education Commission) of 1970 defined Weiterbildung as Fortsetzung oder 
Wiederaufnahme organisierten Lernens nach Abschluss einer unterschiedlichen 
ausgerichteten Bildungsphase (continuation or renewal of a organised learning 
following completion of different types of education) (in Deutscher Bildungsrat 
1973:3 cited in Dohmen 1996: 85) – a definition which at least some German 
educators would like to see revised (Nuissl 1997:4). School education, too, is 
structured around divided lines. There are, despite various attempts, relatively few
comprehensive schools in Germany. Conversely, the few private schools are socially insignificant. Instead most children, having been to primary school, go either to a Hauptschule, a Mittelschule or to a Gymnasium, which could be equated to secondary modern, middle and grammar schools. It is still difficult to move from one type of school to another. In the former GDR, on the other hand, no such distinctions were made. Instead a form of comprehensive schooling, the Polytechnische Oberschule, was introduced already in 1959. Following unification in 1990 some east German states have adopted West German models of school differentiation, while others have opted to reorganise and maintain some form comprehensive schooling, depending on party-political orientations of the ruling government (Baumert et al. 1994). The highly structured system of education has also, at least partly, been the cause of success in vocational education and training and the Duales System, so often referred to in Britain. Much has to do with the German respect for qualifications and for the achievement of an Abschluss (completion). Unlike in Britain, in Germany to have gained an Abschluss, be it in secondary schooling, higher education or vocational education and training is socially and in the area of work absolutely essential (Wittpoth 1999: 31). Without a recognised school leaving certificate, for example, it is difficult to obtain an apprenticeship or entry to higher education, pressures most youngsters seem to accept. Notions of social class or social exclusion, one of the key issues in British adult education, matter considerably less in German adult education discourse, a point often misunderstood in Britain. In terms of adult education, the structural division between the various providers, however, define areas of mission, remits and activities, all of which have distinct social contexts relevant to a particular period in time of history, and which merit further clarification.
Historical contexts

It was in 1996 that NIACE celebrated its 75th anniversary. 1994 was the year German *Volkshochschulen* commemorated 75 years of their existence (Oppermann, Röhrig 1995). German adult education institutes, in the words of Textor (1986: 283) are the “greatest and most prominent organisations” in German adult education. In Britain, as apparent in the opening statement of the 1919 Smith Report referred to previously, government intervention and state control did not marry easily with the spirit of adult education in its early days. Instead, English adult education excelled as a social movement on the strengths of individualism, self reliance and mutual support.

Embedded in a common understanding of its social class structure, the education of adults served, above all, as a means to disperse cultural knowledge and understanding for individual enhancement and the common good. Middle-class aspirations and Christian values rather than radical social reform or the need for specific vocational training helped to lay the foundations of bodies such as the university extension programmes and mutual improvement societies (Arthur in Jarvis 1992a: 357). The tutorial class movement of 1906, though aimed at working men, and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA), offered education for its own sake rather than as agents of social change. Just like in Germany the radical working class movements generally remained on fringe of adult education (Kelly 1992: 248-254, Röhrig in Pöggeler 1975: 246).

German texts usually refer to the *Gesellschaft für die Verbreitung von Volksbildung* in 1871 as the first adult education organisation in the country. By 1919 adult education was well established and most of the *Volkshochschulen* (adult education institutes)
were founded. Significant in the context of any comparative study is the role of language as a tool for mediation of meaning and understanding as referred to in the previous chapter. In German, for example, the moulding of the ideal of the German Volk is a consequence of the hegemony of the French, the French Revolution and the subsequent rise against the French. I have already referred to Fichte (1762-1814) and his famous Reden an die deutsche Nation in chapter 4. Fichte, apparently a brilliant public speaker, was perhaps more significant for his contribution to the philosophy of teaching science, ethics and religion. He was the first to raise ideas about a socialist state and the state’s responsibility to ensure freedom of speech and the individual’s right to work for a useful life (Störig 1993: 450). As Hahn (1995: 72) points out, whilst British, French and American philosophers gave pride to the place of the individual, their German counterparts felt the necessity of placing individuals in the wider context, be it a nation, state or Volk. The word Volk (folk or people of a country, or nation) is not easily translated into the English language and context – yet is widely used in various forms in the German language and in the context of adult education. Volksschule was at one time the term used for an elementary school for children aged between 6 and 14. Volksbildung (adult education), and Volksbildner (adult educator) or Volksbildungsarbeit (adult education work), even Volksbildungswwesen (the system of adult education) were widely used terms in general adult education up to 1945. All these terms convey a sense of collective purpose for the good of the country which is less apparent in the early days of English adult education.

By 1919, and this is a noteworthy milestone, adult education in Germany was legally safeguarded at state, regional and community level in the new Weimar constitution. Following the First World War, followers of the Neue Richtung, that is, those adult
educators who rejected traditional forms of knowledge-based education, set out to
develop the whole human being according to liberal, andragogical, and somewhat
nationalistic notions of education which differed sharply from those prevalent in
schools and universities at the time (Friedenthal-Haase 1993: 256, Tietgens in Nolda
1996: 46; Arnold 1998: 15). This is noteworthy because in Germany, unlike in
England and Wales, adult education in practical and ideological terms developed
independently of universities and other higher education institutions.

The period of the Weimar Republic was a time of instability, crisis and class struggle.
However, there existed also a great belief in the power of education. Adult education
was promoted and financially supported by the states, without being controlled by
them (Textor 1986: 284). In 1927 the Reichsverband der deutschen Volkshochschulen
(an organisation of all German Volkshochschulen) was founded with the aim to
concentrate on research and to improve the qualifications of adult education teachers.
During the period of National Socialism 1933-1945, adult education, however, was
considered to have been influenced by communists and left-wing liberalism and hence
gradually abolished or reconstituted to fit Nazi ideology of workers’ education under
the slogan ‘Kraft durch Freude’ (power through joy) (Arnold 1988:16). The
Reichsverband deutscher Volkshochschulen, too, was finally dissolved under the Nazi
regime.

In England between the two world wars adult education became increasingly
dependent on both state and local authority funds. Gradually a common pattern
emerged. Extension lectures, WEA tutorial classes, adult schools, residential colleges
and voluntary associations provided a rich diversity both of form and motive. The
The term ‘adult education’ was at that time widely used in a pioneering sense of an adult education movement promoting liberal education for social reform (Groombridge in Tight 1983: 5). The 1944 Education Act charged local authorities under Section 7 to “contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community”, thereby providing a sense of continuity for adult education which was to last until the 1988 Education Reform Act and dismantling of local education powers in all matters of education.

In the years following 1945 German adult education organisations re-established themselves according to models prevalent during the Weimarer Republik and, under the influence of British Occupying Forces, to those in England and Wales (Borinski in Hearnden 1978, Arnold 1988: 19). At that time, one of the key tasks of German adult education concerned practical aspects of survival on the one hand and political education coupled with the need to foster a spirit of collective responsibility in the decision-making processes on the other. Political education was imposed by the Allies after 1945 as part of their anti-Nazi re-education programmes. “In the post-war years Britain was a sort of Mecca all those engaged in building up adult education systems were keen to visit” (Becker in Hearnden 1978: 279). It is perhaps noteworthy that the year 1946 marked the first and the last annual meeting of all German adult education institutes, that is, before those in the GDR under guidance of the Soviets became state controlled organisations (Betriebsakademien) for mainly political-, second chance-, and vocational education for adults (Siebert in Strunk 1990: 86). By 1949 adult education was legally protected in the East German constitution of 1949 though it was not included in the West German Grundgesetz of the same year. Indeed, in West Germany it was not until 1957 that the predecessor of the DIE, the Pädagogische
Forschungsstelle für wissenschaftliche Dienstleistungen (pedagogical research agency for academic services), later renamed Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes (PAV), was founded with the brief to undertake research into adult education.

Arnold (1988:6) refers to the period 1945-1966 as the Rekonstruktionsphase (phase of reconstruction) and 1967-1975 as the period of the Große Bildungsreform (major education reform). Several noteworthy milestones of German adult education should be mentioned in this context. The report of the German Education Committee of 1960 on “The Situation and Role of Adult Education”, for example, accepted the principle that adult education was a public sector responsibility. The Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen (plan for the structure of the German education system) by the Advisory Education Committee of the German Education Council in 1970 and the Bildungsgesamtplan (Overall education plan) of 1973 established Weiterbildung (further or continuing education) as the ‘fourth pillar’ of the German education system together with initial education, higher education, initial vocational education and training (Arnold 1988: 23-28, Weinberg 1989: 18, Nuissl 1994: 13 among others). It was the time of the Realistische Wende (turn to realism) which reflected a sense of pragmatism not acknowledged in British adult education until 1976 and the Venables Report (Open University 1976).

In Britain, just as in Germany, the 1960s was a time of expansion and relative optimism, that is, until the oil crisis of 1973 triggered mass unemployment, the start of the recession and direct state intervention with various short and long term action programmes to combat rising unemployment. Until then British adult education
programmes and curricula were devised on the basis of a service or needs orientation (Champion 1975). In part this orientation, according to Lawson (1979:19), was a response to the whole context of non-vocational adult education which was voluntary and at that time recreationally conceived and in the main competing against a range of options adults had to occupy their leisure time. By having adopted this orientation adult education became a satisfier of demand. The meeting of demand approach was cloaked in notions of institutional student-centredness and carried to its logical conclusion. It was an individualistic concept of adult education referred to by Keddie (in Thompson 1980: 63-64) as the ideology of individualism. Jarvis (1985:45) alludes to the 1960s as the romantic period of adult education and to Lawton’s (1973) model of the classical (didactic) and romantic (learner-centred) curriculum based on individual learner experiences and learner needs. Other developments were of considerable importance. One was the beginning of local radio and the rapid spread of close-circuit radio and television, both in local education authority areas and in many colleges and universities. The BBC, having broadcast on radio its first series of adult education talks in 1924, started its adult education service in October 1963. The 'Open University' presented its first course to about 9000 undergraduates in 1971 (DES 1992). Its German counterpart, the Fernuniversität Hagen, was founded in 1975.

During this period, too, the institutional character of German adult education, particularly of the Volkshochschulen, was reinforced and strengthened at national and state level (Schlutz in Mader 1993:29). From about the mid-1960s onwards, adult education centres adopted the adult-oriented Zertifikatsangebot, a modular examination and certification system for various subjects taught in adult education institutes such as foreign languages, mathematics, technical sciences. The
Zertifikatssystem was centrally administered by the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband until 1998, when a separate organisation (Weiterbildungs-Testsysteme GmbH) became responsible for its commercial exploitation. A further indicator of increasing professionalisation from about 1969 onwards was the introduction of adult education as an academic subject in German universities either within a general undergraduate degree of education or as a single-subject undergraduate degree in adult education (Schulenberg 1972: 105). Nowadays, adult education can be studied in close to forty German universities.

Structures and frameworks

The question of what might be considered ‘typical’ of German adult education, or conversely ‘typically’ English is an intriguing one and in one sense almost too complex to answer. German adult educators, when asked about similarities and differences between both countries, point to two key principles on which modern German adult education is founded (Nuissl, Ebbe in conversation, 1998). Both need to be understood if concerns around lifelong learning are to be meaningful. They relate to factors which determine processes of powers in decision-making and the implementation of change – one of the main differences between German and English adult education and political intervention. The principle of pluralistische Trägerstruktur (pluralistic system of adult education), for example is one of the key characteristics of the German adult education system. It indicates that not only local community adult education institutes but also the unions, the catholic and protestant churches together with other agencies are recognised as being responsible for adult education and, in law, are entitled to receive financial support (Arnold 1988:19). To
give examples: in 1994 participation rates for the *Volkshochschulen* amounted to 28%, for both church organisations 8%, for private adult education institutions 9% and trade unions 2% (Wittpoth 1999:10).

The other principle, the principle of *Subsidiarität*, signifies that centralised control has generally been reduced and decision-making is devolved to the lowest effective level. This has meant giving more powers to the regions and encouraging the social partners to play increasingly dominant roles at national, regional, local and enterprise level. The *Länder* rather than central government have the powers and carry responsibility for educational matters and central government will only act if and when circumstances necessitate intervention. The principle of ‘subsidiarity’ is linked to the period after 1945, Germany’s education policies and democratisation, citizenship and east-west conflicts. At that time the new constitutional consensus was directed primarily towards governmental stability, a horizontal and vertical division of powers as a prevention of potential abuse of those powers. The Basic Law of 1949, as Kappler points out, was greatly influenced by the personal experiences of its authors under the National Socialist dictatorship. In many parts it clearly indicates that they were trying to avoid the mistakes that had been partly responsible for the demise of the Weimar democracy (Kappler 1997:162).

In the United Kingdom, it needs to be stated, democracy is represented by the powers of Parliament and not the majority of people. The British constitution is formed by statute, partly by common law and partly by precepts and practices known as conventions. The rules have been codified and can be adapted according to changing conditions at any time by Acts of Parliament and by general acceptance of new
The acceptance of conventions, however, relies on negotiation rather than rules, on flexibility and accommodation – though the danger of political abuse is forever present. It is certainly one of which most Germans are acutely aware. It is for this reason, that in the United Kingdom without restrictions of a national constitution, political institutions are able to exercise power and control over many educational matters including those affecting adult continuing education. One only has to think of the demise of the GLC or the local education authorities since the 1988 and 1992 Education Acts in this respect. It is reasonable to assume that in similar circumstances in Germany the Bundesverfassungsschutzamt (constitutional court) would have prevented such actions. However, it is at times overlooked that there are four countries in the United Kingdom: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. All have their distinct histories and cultures (Gerver, Morrow and Moreland in Jarvis 1992a) and, with the implementation of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act overall responsibility for education except Scotland which has conducted its own affairs in education since 1707 and the Act of Union.

While there are four education systems in the United Kingdom there are sixteen in Germany. The 16 Länder (states) are responsible for almost all educational matters. All differ in size, geography, trade, industry, economic and social culture. The German nation essentially grew out of a number of German tribes such as the Franks, the Saxons, the Swabians and the Bavarians. The ethnic regions, as Kappler (1997:16) points out, are not identical to those present federal states, most of which were formed only after the Second World War in agreement with the occupying powers though Germany has always been divided into states (Kleinstaaterei is referred to in chapter 4). Many of these boundaries were drawn without any consideration for old traditions.
To give an indication of the differences in population alone, it is worth pointing out that the state of Bavaria has nearly 12 million inhabitants, Brandenburg only 137,000 and Bremen, one of the Hanseatic Free Cities and also a state, has 549,000 inhabitants. The Kultusminister Konferenz (KMK) (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states and central government) and other co-ordinating committees ensure degrees of harmonisation between the various states in all educational matters, particularly in secondary education. However, consultative processes and implementation of new regulations remain cumbersome and steeped in historical contexts and traditions. Adult education was particularly strengthened by the fact that during the early 1970s most Länder (states) introduced legislation aimed at safeguarding adult and continuing education, Saarland and Lower Saxony in 1970, for example, and Hesse and Bavaria among others in 1974. The entitlement of paid educational leave, between 5 and 10 days for all employees, was also regulated by law during this period. In 1990 both Germanies were united, East German adult education, which had more or less vanished as adult education organisations with a liberal learner-centred philosophy and practice, was restructured along West German lines, a complex and not always comfortable process, and, for some at least, a missed opportunity to rethink adult education per se (Siebert in Strunk 1990: 98, Rohlmann 1993: 17 among others).

In the realities of German Länder politics nowadays the continuing education laws vary greatly in the way they provide for the arrangement of adult education (Nuissl 1994:16). The conservative state of Bavaria, for example allocates about 45 million DM for adult education a year compared to the socialist state of Northrhine-Westphalia with 250 million DM for the same period (Behler, 2000). Nevertheless, in
1994 the organisations for responsible for continuing education in Northrhine-Westphalia agreed that the funding of a forever-expanding provision needed serious consideration. For this reason the state introduced in September 1999 a new law Gesetz zur Modernisierung der Weiterbildung which, while committing the state to similar levels of expenditure, prioritises certain areas of educational activities over others. Similar to Schedule 2 of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, the new law, for the first time in German adult education history, reduces levels of subsidy for leisure-time oriented courses in favour of those that serve Angebote zur lebensgestaltenden Bildung und zu Existenzfragen einschliesslich des Bereiches der sozialen und interkulturellen Beziehungen (provisions which are oriented towards improving the quality of life and basic needs including those which relate to social and intercultural education) (Landtag Intern 5.10.1999). Other states such as Hesse and Lower Saxony are in the process of preparing similar legislation.

**Conclusion and further questions**

With reference to the 1996 Year of Lifelong Learning the Commission reported in 1999 that its true impact could not be scientifically measured, although there was plenty of evidence to support the claim that the initiative had helped to improve the situation in Member states. It was also noted that the concept of lifelong learning had gained acceptance in public opinion and political discourse. The initiative had been timely in helping to change society and attitudes fundamentally (EU Bulletin, Education and Culture 2/5-1999).
Almost all statements made in both countries emphasise the need to adapt or to change. Change is part of ongoing political agendas determined to shift the responsibilities away from providers towards the individual with corresponding effects on the institutions. The impression gained is that in Britain change is more speedily dealt with while similar processes take longer to implement in Germany. Credit accumulation and transfer is such an example. The German horizontal and vertical power structure is designed to minimise government-led interventions.

Furthermore, in the course of the century adult education organisations have developed along divided lines with little interaction between, for example, the universities and vocational education and training. Key issues in Germany relate to improved flexibility and the nature of collaboration with other private and public educational providers. In both countries the need to change speedily and to adapt to new global economic pressures is deeply ingrained into the current rhetoric around lifelong learning. As Edwards (1997:22) points out, “Change, and particularly the unpredictability of change, is often held to be a central characteristic of the contemporary world.” Edwards considers five aspects of change which can be readily identified: its nature; the speed of change; the contested nature of change; the problems conceptualising change; and the change itself (page 24). He states:

Being able to make sense of these changes, to reflexively understand them, to act within and on them in developing opportunities for lifelong learning is a major challenge for policy-makers and workers in this terrain. A basic premise, therefore, in situating change ... is that unless we are able to understand and shape change and the meanings of change - as continually ambivalent, contingent and uncertain rather than a process of overcoming uncertainty - our capacity to work flexibly in our particular settings and with adult learners to develop their capacities to understand and shape change and the meanings of change will be severely curtailed (Edwards 1997: 28-29).
In England those in adult continuing education have had to prove stamina, flexibility, and adaptability perhaps more so than many other educationalists in recent years. These characteristics though are not all that new. Elsdon (in Mee and Wiltshire 1981:7) with reference to the 1970s and adult education in England and Wales writes about flexibility and the ability to react quickly to new circumstances needed at the time. Flexibility, he states, though admirable also had disadvantages because of the difficulties in maintaining degrees of constancy. Arguably, there are also advantages in the German system of adult education. Safeguarded by legislation and a basic constitution which permits less direct intervention, adult education has developed its own strengths to which Anglo-Saxon adult educators rarely refer (Knoll 1996c: 16). The principle of plurality has ensured that many active players in community adult education, industry and commerce, the trade unions, the churches, numerous organisations involved with migrants and ethnic minorities, receive state recognition and resources, unparalleled in Britain. Change, however, can come in many different guises. In Germany the unexpected financial burden attached to the even more unexpected unification led to a doubling of state debt between 1991 and 1997 together with an mounting rise of public expenditure which, in the end, led to a reassessment of all welfare expenditure and reforms at various stages of implementation, though incremental changes in welfare reforms had already begun long before unification under the Kohl government in 1982 (Flockton 1998: 81-82).

The United Kingdom, however, experienced what is termed the “Thatcherite Educational Revolution” between the years 1979-1990. McLean (1992:76) states that Thatcherism may be understood, first in terms of wider political and social “philosophy”. The Thatcher ‘ideology’ was distanced from prevailing views of the
immediate past and was seen as highly personal to the prime minister herself. Key concepts were privatisation and order associated with strong political agencies at national level and the revival of nationalistic identity. The application of these approaches, according to McLean, led to "violent attacks" on public agencies. Charismatic power was reinforced by the seizure of decision making by ministers and especially the prime minister and the "all-seeing" approach to implementation (page 78). In Britain under Thatcher right wing conviction politics turned upside down almost every aspect of private and public life during this time. Severe financial cuts, imposed reforms and counter-reforms led to numerous mergers, take-overs and reorganisations for the sake of monetary efficiency and increased individual responsibility much to the dismay of those in adult education. Gray and Williams (1996: 63) with reference to the 1992 Act and university extra-mural provision state, "An era has come to an end in British higher education and, perhaps, in British history. Over three years a period, a unique, century-old tradition of liberal adult education, slipped into the past without so much of a fanfare or public comment. It is too soon to know whether it just outlived its usefulness, was killed of or simply died through neglect." Indeed, adult education itself, as Edwards proposes, can no longer be described as a 'field' of academic study or practice. Instead, the metaphor of 'moorland' is suggested as more resonant and resourceful in relation to understanding the processes of de-differentiation.

Moorlands are open spaces ungovernable by the imperatives of technical instrumental rationality, although still spaces inscribed with the exercise of power and attempts to place boundaries in the way of walkers on that terrain. On the moorland, there is more open-ended exploration, a searching for new routes to travel through complex and uncertain ecology and archaeology. (Edwards 1997:69)
Using the same metaphor the impression is gained that moorlands, unlike fields, no longer have a functional purpose. Adult education wanderers in the UK may have been confined to moorland spaces, which though potentially full of interest and excitement, offer few routes back into fields. In the German context, adult educators are still ploughing fields, it seems, though a few fences are beginning to crumble and moorlands are beginning to be in sight.
Chapter 8

Comparisons revisited: constructing and sharing new meaning

The phenomenon of understanding, then, shows the universality of human linguisticality as a limitless medium that carries everything within it - not only the 'culture' that has been handed down to us through language but absolutely everything - because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of “understandings” and understandability in which we move (Gadamer 1976: 25).

In the previous chapter I referred to some lifelong learning policies and events which emerged in the context of the 1996 Year of Lifelong Learning both in England and Germany with the intention to draw some general conclusions about adult education in both countries and about processes involved in undertaking such a study. I did not have a particular hypothesis in mind, simply a set of questions. For example, both countries were developing initiatives determined by an external agency: how did they respond? While investigating matters further several issues emerged. Some relate to the chapter’s content, others to the processes in doing comparative research. With regard to the content, the question of detail and depth began to occupy my mind. What is the relationship between assumed knowledge about both countries and what elements need further clarification? Where does one draw the boundaries? There was a further decision to make: I choose not to start off with an overview of structures and systems in England or Germany. I could have, and perhaps should have, begun with a collection of data about, for example, adult education institutes or the number of people attending various courses, and then compared these according to the Bereday model of juxtaposition. Instead, I looked at the 1996 Year of Lifelong Learning, its impact on adult education and some of the underlying reasons for related
developments. I then chose to 'peel' away various layers to the point where it seemed to me explanations became unavoidable. To use the metaphor of teaching grammar: I used an inductive rather than a deductive approach. I could have presented the complete set of grammar rules, explain these, together with all exceptions and then expect the learner to apply these – a deductive structural approach. In this case a linguistic description identifies and explains units and constituent elements (grammatical components) that make up language and shows how they interrelate and interact. Language viewed from the perspective of structuralism ignores the evolving and elusive nature of language, language that is ephemeral and limitless at the same time as well as the functional purpose of language learning. It also ignores the learner, and his or her ability to cope with new language items in spontaneous speech. To stay within language teaching for a little while longer: Lado’s (1957) short-lived, structuralist approach to 'contrastive analysis' encouraged learners to compare or contrast a word or sentence in the mother tongue with a similar one in the language of learning – which, in practical terms, caused endless confusion and hindered rather than developed spontaneous speech (Stem 1983: 159). Such experiences have shown that a contrastive, juxtaposition approach causes more problems than it solves. Similarly, a deductive approach might satisfy cognitively those able to cope with it, but it does not lead to skilful application what has been practised.

In the process of writing the time factor began to cause irritation. Much has changed since 1996, the Year of Lifelong Learning, particularly in Britain. Another problem relates to data which can often conflict and mislead, if taken from different sources. The Internet is not always a reliable ally. Documents taken from official government or EU web sites, often lack the contextual information hard copies might provide.
However, these are problems all researchers have to tackle. As such they are not particularly noteworthy. There is another point, however, which has a bearing on comparative studies. I was conscious that I interpreted findings from my *emic*, bicultural perspective and in light of my own knowledge and experience. I began to be aware that the reader (recipient, audience) might not understand all the points and cultural contexts I raised without further clarification, even digression. The reference to adult education history is such an example. In the process of writing I was also struck how comparative studies in particular are affected by time and space distanciation referred to by Giddens (1990:18). The word ‘space’, he argues, is often mistaken for place; while the former is not dependent on locality, the latter is best conceptualised as the physical setting of social activity as situated geographically. For example, I referred to the German government’s paper on higher education for the 21st century found on the Internet. Yet I cannot relate the document in terms of either time or place, even space. It seemed significant to me particularly in light of the Dearing Report’s impact in Britain. Yet without further research I cannot from my ‘dislocated’ place determine its significance in the German context. In the researcher’s mind, therefore, elements under investigation may take up more ‘space’ than appropriate to their geographical place and time context. It is question of balance and emphasis which is easily distorted within a comparative study.

The time element is also complex. Changes are taking place in both countries but with different speeds and levels of effectiveness. In Britain the speed of change seems to be faster than in Germany but not in all areas of adult education, and not all areas of social activities. In the German context, the unification processes from 1989 onwards happened with astonishing speed. It follows that speed also an imaginary concept.
What may seem fast to one person or group of people may seem slow to another. Giddens (1990:18) refers to the problem 'embedding' and 'disembedding' into or from the local context both in terms of time and space, concepts which seem particularly poignant in terms of cross-cultural studies. The words of Harvey (1989: 227), mentioned in chapter 1, come to mind. Harvey refers to the compression of time which makes planning difficult. "We have to learn, he argues, to cope with this volatality, look for deeper meanings and pay attention to localities and specificities" (Harvey 1989: 286). Issues in relation to time and space distanciation conflict with the static model of juxtapositioning in the positivist paradigm.

The positivist approach

The Bereday model of juxtapositioning which aims to make comparative studies a scientific exercise, can be illustrated in a simple diagram:

![Diagram](image)

I stated in Chapter 3 that this approach has not been helpful to international comparative adult education. Adult education, as previously argued, is a social
phenomenon which cannot be explained simply in terms of systems, structures or institutions.

The positivist approach expects that the researcher adopts the *etic* position; he or she is required to remain outside and ‘objective’. In comparative terms this can really only be achieved if a researcher studies two countries of which he or she had no experience at all as Fig. 2 seeks to demonstrate:

Here researchers, rather like ethnographers, who are outsiders, study the two countries or cultural communities which share similar phenomena to make the exercise of differentiation meaningful and worthwhile. The researchers would rely on sets of data, study texts, observations, or conduct quantitative or qualitative inquiries in order to arrive at some general conclusions meaningful to the themselves, and perhaps to those not familiar with those countries. Much depends on the researchers’ reasons for undertaking such studies. Such a model, however, may in danger of being static and bounded. It does not take into account the contemporary context, a time, when “living in the modern world is more like being aboard a careering juggernaut rather than in a carefully controlled and well-driven motor car” (Giddens 1990: 53).
Blumer, McLeod and Rosengreen (1992: 287) state that in comparative studies, be they temporally or spatially oriented, there are three fundamental different, basic tasks to be carried out:

1. identifying a set of basic parameters and their structural interrelationships,
2. measuring the parameter values, as well as assessing the strength of the relationship, and
3. comparing differences and similarities in parameter values and structural relationships over space, as well as charting the development of parameter values and structural relationships over time.

To be really successful, the authors argue, comparative research demands that – at least in the long run – all three types of tasks be undertaken. In the study of adult continuing education systems these tasks are almost impossible, particularly if, as Edwards (1997) proposes, adult education now finds itself in a 'moorland' as opposed to a 'field' and its intentions, activities and outcomes are less easily described than ever before. Sztompka (in Albrow and King 1990: 54), from the perspective of comparative sociology, offers solutions. He argues that there are difficulties in referring to holistic concepts such as systems or countries. He suggests with reference to globalisation and the information explosion that we seem to know more though we know less in terms of concreteness and specificity. The scope of the comparative inquiry may be to be intensive rather than extensive. The point is, he continues, is to narrow down the scope of applicability, and to find out more about cases included, their individual traits, specific qualities and concrete characteristics. He suggests a sixfold typology:

1. encompassing
Sztompka states that the traditional comparative method was to seek uniformities in the sea of differences – inspired by a ‘naturalistic’ methodological creed. The globalisation of the world brings about the complete reversal of the cognitive situation. “What really becomes baffling and problematic is the preservation of enclaves of uniqueness amid growing homogeneity and uniformity. At the same time, methodological creeds are radically changed with the widespread anti-naturalist backlash and the ascendance of the humanistic, interpretative, qualitative ‘soft’ approach” (page 55). The additional heuristic bonus of such research into peculiarities of meanings is that it sensitises the scholar to the historical dimension of the social world; it inevitably invokes a historical perspective – the history of past divergences. It is paying attention to what is distinct, to specify and detail which would make comparisons worthwhile. Comparative adult education could well benefit from this line of argument since one of its main failings was precisely the perceived need to study the ‘big’ picture rather than to look more closely at fragments in depth. There are difficulties in comparing the ‘big’ picture as, for example, the THENUCE project with its research into university continuing education in several European countries clearly demonstrates (referred to in chapter 5). Sztompka’s typology and his reference to specificities and distinctions at a time of worldwide heterogeneity might offer solutions to those individual scholar considering small-scale comparative research studies. The researcher, as Sztompka indicates, would soon want to look at historical
divergences, which, alas, also needs references to cultural representations expressed in language or languages, a point not previously considered. Without at least a reading knowledge of the other language the researcher would have to study historical, or any other texts, in translation, unless, of course, both countries of cultural communities share the same language.

**Mediating meaning**

In practice scholars have choices to make: they either opt for an empirical research design based on qualitative or quantitative data, or they investigate a theme, topic or phenomenon they intend to describe and analyse with reference to their own knowledge and experience. They do so by referring to reliable data, academic theories and texts, historical accounts, or perhaps discussing the topic with others in relation to experiences, knowledge and information. They then develop their line of argument and present it in a logical fashion before drawing conclusions. Thus the researcher attaches meaning to a given phenomenon in light reflective cross-cultural analysis and mediates that meaning to the recipient (audience) so that the meaning can be shared and externally validated. Jarvis (1992b: 158) considers the term meaning to be ambiguous with many different meanings. He explores four different usages “conducted within the framework of a biased culture and language, so that conclusions we reach may themselves be socially constructed.” The word meaning, he argues, can be applied in a metaphysical sense, as a noun in the objectified sense, as a verb used to convey individual understanding or intention or, with reference to Luckmann (1967), in the sociocultural sense, which implies that cultural knowledge is equated with the process of socialisation. In the context of comparative studies it is
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the latter which is the most meaningful. Finding and sharing meaning is a two-way, often implicit rather than explicit process. Both the researcher and the yet unknown reader of the study enter a silent communication - rather like the author of a book who, in the process of writing addresses potential readers he or she is unlikely to ever meet and who may not even share the same period in time. Nevertheless, there exists a bond, a form of communicative interaction, between the author and the reader. The researcher presents his or her findings in a style appropriate to the academic community to be addressed. The language used and the points clarified depend on this kind of understanding. Conversely, as Habermas (1979:11) points out, the reader in trying to understand must take up the position of the 'author' and go beyond what is meant and intended by the author (referred to in chapter 2). The reader, or the academic research community, engages with the researcher and the study presented in some form of communication, which can be silent and in relation to the self:

Several questions arise all at once: can a phenomenon be viewed by both the researcher and the recipient in isolation without reference to forces which shift understanding and pull it in various directions all at the same time? What enables the researcher to attach meaning to that phenomenon and then to mediate that meaning to others? Dewey (1958:16) distinguishes between primary and secondary experiences. He uses the example of a chair as illustration: "When I look at a chair, I say I experience it. But what I actually experience is only a few of the elements that go to make up a chair, namely the colour that belongs to the chair under these particular conditions of light, the shape which the chair displays when viewed from the angle, etc." Dewey continues to argue that the primary experience is of little value for purposes of analysis and control. The very existence of reflection is proof of its
deficiencies. Reflection, on the other hand, turns the primary experience into a secondary one.

We learn, in short, that qualities which we attribute to objects ought to be imputed to our own ways of experiencing them, and that these in turn are due to the force of intercourse and custom. This discovery marks an emancipation; it purifies and remakes the objects of our direct or primary experience (Dewey [1929] 1958:14).

I have previously referred to Husserl (1967: 258) and Schutz (1970: 118) who have used the example of the apple or cherry tree to explain similar ideas (see chapter 2). Glaserfeld, from the perspective of radical constructivism (in Steier 1991: 17), goes further with his example of a ‘book’ which, as he states can only be understood only if the onlooker has had experiences of a book before. In other words, to perceive or recognise a book is to find something in one’s experiential field that fits one’s concept of a book. “All it means is that in some part of our present experiential field there is a kind of raw material which, if co-ordinated in particular way, is sufficiently close to what our concept of a book demands, so that we can accept it as an instantiation of that concept.”

Lawson (2000) is more pragmatic when he highlights what he considers to be weaknesses in these postmodern ‘anti-realist’ assertions. He argues that these weaknesses derive in part from a neglect of semantics. There is a commonsense view based upon the insistence that ‘the sky is blue’ or, ‘this is a book’ that both statements are based on ‘truth’. He argues that concepts of truth are already embedded in language and that any competent user of language knows how to make true assertions by virtue that of knowing how to use language correctly. There are semantic rules that
are understood by the speaker. Furthermore language components such as the conditional tense allow distinctions between commonsense truths and unsubstantiated assertions ("I could have tried harder but I didn’t") (page 91). In the context of comparative research we must assume that the researcher has the tools to distinguish between facts and fiction, or at least attempts to do so. These tools may be in the form of language or a particular set of knowledge and experience. But, no doubt, he or she will apply some notions of commonsense truths, however one might define these. Nevertheless, it is the researcher who has to accept commonsense in a subjective, interpretative manner. These truths might be more difficult to accept in different cultural circumstances particularly if another language creates barriers.

Bearing the ambiguous concept of bilingualism in mind (referred to in chapter 2), the researcher and the recipient may share the same mother tongue and culture, or they may share the same language but not the same culture. Alternatively, they may share neither the first language nor the same culture. In this case the researcher may be bicultural but not the recipient - at least not in relation to the study undertaken. The researcher’s task is, therefore to mediate bicultural meaning to the recipient. To make that mediation meaningful the researcher needs to also have experience of the recipient’s culture - rather like a translator or interpreter, mediates between two language and cultures and makes that mediation meaningful to the recipient or the speaker of the other language. Habermas (1979: 1) refers to strategic action in general which are derivatives of action oriented to reaching understanding (verstandigungsoorientiert). The goal is to reach not only understanding (Verständnis) but also to bring about about an agreement (Einverständnis) as fig. 3 aims to illustrate.
To illustrate my point with a practical example: in the previous chapter I referred to the notion of *Abschluss* (completion) which I determined was significant to the German context and hence in need of explanation. Yet I have no empirical data which ‘prove’ the reliability of my assumptions nor can I equate this in ‘naturalistic’ fashion with the English context. Instead I rely, in the spirit of ethical scholarship, on my bi-cultural knowledge and understanding of both countries and seek to mediate that knowledge to the reader or recipient who does not share the same cultural meaning. I consider that this kind of interpretation and mediation becomes a necessity if my aim is to achieve understanding. It is therefore a valid approach to research though in this instance my point was confirmed by Wittphoth, a German academic. Difficulties may occur because neither the phenomenon nor the perception of a phenomenon remain static. Instead, both mutate or adapt to different temporal, cultural and social circumstances and with varying speed, though their fundamental existence is not in doubt. In other words, the word *Abschluss* exists in terms of dictionary use but its application and meaning may change quite unexpectedly.
So far I have considered the individual bicultural researcher who aims to negotiate meaning to a monocultural recipient. There are other modes in which comparative research takes place. The Leeds Studies Cross-Cultural Studies in the Education of Adults (see Friedenthal-Haase, Hake and Marriott 1991) offer such examples. Here scholars present historical studies about cross-cultural relationships and influences which have contributed to the development of adult education in their own countries. They mediate meaning to the reader and by implication invite reflection and sharing of meaning. There are more explicit examples. In chapter 4 I discussed European-wide adult education projects which, implicitly rather than explicitly, are comparative research studies. They involve a group of scholars from two or more countries who investigate adult education phenomena in two or more countries. Usually a scholar or group of scholars investigate these within their own countries, they are then reported to other members of the group who will have done likewise with reference to their own countries. The group, rather than the individual, then collectively interprets these findings and draws conclusions. In other words the scholar constructs meaning out of his or her own situation and mediates that meaning to others in a spirit of mutuality and co-operation. In this case there are two meanings, the primary meaning which is constructed in relation to self and its cultural context and the secondary meaning which is collectively constructed from the other primary meaning by the group. Figure 4 aims to clarify these points.
In chapter 2, I referred to Shotter (1993: 19) and a third kind of knowledge. This is a kind of knowledge one has from within a situation, a social institution or society, or, in this instance, from collaborative comparative research. In this instance individual researchers cannot come to a shared understanding of the phenomenon under investigation on their own. They are dependent on negotiation processes within the group. However, embedded in this presentation are notions of imaginary situations. Without further research I have no way of understanding the extent or quality of collaborative meaning which I assume to have been achieved. After all, scholars taking part in such projects, may disagree with conclusions reached or have their prejudices confirmed and retreat into their own cultural environment rather than actively share this new kind of knowledge. Nuissl (1999) refers to the lack of evaluation in many SOCRATES projects. A reader of the German and English reports of the SOCRATES project *Making it Work: European Universities and*
Lifelong Learning may perceive differences in interpretation about descriptions of both countries in the final report (Taylor 1999). But then again, such interpretation may point to reader’s subjectivity in the process of interpretation. As Habermas (1979: 11) points out, “Descriptions and explications have different ranges; they can begin on the surface and push through to underlying structures. We are familiar with this fact in regard to explanation of natural phenomena – theories can be more or less general. The same is true of meaning explications.” Within the interpretive, constructivist paradigm all knowledge and claims to knowledge are reflexive of the process, assumptions, location, history, and context of the knower and knowing. From this point of view, the argument goes, validity depends on the ‘interpretive communities’, or the audience – who may be other researchers and academics – and the goals of the research. Validity will be quite different for different audiences though from the narrow conception of validity it is tied to the researcher’s academic audience (Altheide, Johnson in Denzin and Lincoln (1994:488).

The process of sharing meaning and mediating that meaning to others for external validation are dependent on the use of language, be it in spoken or written form. They are, therefore, dependent on each other’s communication skills. They may communicate in their mother tongue or in the other language, or indeed intra-culturally, in a third language. Equally, as discussed in chapter 6, researchers may study texts written in either their own or in the other language, they may need to interpret these texts on the basis of their own knowledge and experience and then share the newly gained knowledge with other members in that group. Communication within the group, however, cannot be effectively achieved without questions and dialogue. Even, as shown in Fig.3, the researcher mediates from within his or her own
cultural position he or she is still dependent on scholarly inquiry undertaken by either studying data and texts, or by asking questions and receiving answers or a combination of both, whichever is the more likely occurrence. In linguistics, particularly in socio-linguistics, the study of ethnographic communication considers the individual communicative activity in its social setting. Linguists extend language beyond its formal structural components to the study of social contexts and participants in the acts of communication. The speech act is, therefore, more than exchange of messages; it is a socially meaningful episode. Such an episode requires not only a sender and a receiver, messages (content) and means (form) but also attention to the whole person or group, to the environment in which the communication takes place and the means by which these messages are transmitted. Accordingly, the ethnography of communication is concerned with discovering regularities in language use, how communicative units are organised and how they pattern in a much broader sense of ‘ways of speaking’ as well as with how these patterns interrelate in a systematic way with and derive meaning from other aspects of culture (Saville-Troike 1989:12). There are, however, also dimensions to consider: motivation, curiosity and personality and interpersonal relationships; all have a bearing on effective communication. Researchers are human beings after all, and collaborative research projects involve social gatherings in one form or another, though these dimensions are elusive and difficult to embrace in the context of academic research.

In other words, we construct our own life worlds, knowledge and understanding through language when in communication with others and through written and spoken texts. In communicative interaction questions are raised and answered, solutions
rejected or accepted, doubts clarified or confirmed, opinions sought and expressed and facts separated from fiction. The researcher, either the individual or the group of researchers, is tied to communicative interaction, both in spoken and written form, which is based on accepted social conventions and communications strategies. Adults, in the main, know when, for example, to interrupt, to question a point, or to seek clarification, how to be polite, formal and informal etc. They attach meaning to social relationships and processes of communication.

Mead (1967: 75) from a behavioural perspective relates meaning to adjustments individuals make, adjustments which take place through communication. "The central factor in such an adjustment is 'meaning'. Meaning arises and lies within the field of the relationship between the gesture of a given human organism and the subsequent behaviour of this organism as indicated to another human organism by that gesture."

By promoting cross- or intercultural understanding as it arises in comparative studies, the researcher (or group of researchers) aims to alter in some way the recipient's own knowledge and understanding about the cultural communities under investigation. Mead's 'gestures' or communication processes sustain the dynamic elements involved in adjustments individuals make. However, in the postmodern world, according to Shotter (1993:18), uncertainty, vagueness, and ambiguity are the real features of much of the world in which we live and how we 'construct' or 'specify' these features further influences the nature of our own future lives together. Shotter refers to a kind of knowledge that is embodied in the conversational background of our lives, a special kind of knowledge — "to do with how to be a person of this or that particular kind according to the culture into which one develops as a child" — a knowledge which does not have to be formalised in a set of proven statements before it can be
applied (page 19). However, as Shotter points out, if our reality is really the turbulent, 
heterogenous affair, then we should avoid becoming entrapped within the confines 
of claiming that there is a single correct narrative or theory (page 132). In other 
words, we should allow a third knowledge to emerge through communicative 
interaction, even if it is at times a difficult and haphazard process.

Kress (1996: 196) presents similar points, when he argues that theories of meaning 
making, of semiosis in whatever medium, are founded on the late nineteenth century 
notion of stable social systems. With reference to Saussure and his concepts of *langue* 
and *parole* the effect has been to treat the individual as language user and not as 
language maker. Kress argues that this produces dispositions inclined towards an 
allegiance to and adherence to abstract, authoritative, autonomous systems and their 
roles. This may have been useful and even essential in the age of Fordist reproduction. 
“it will not be useful in an age in which ‘Western’ post-industrial societies will need 
to construct new forms of information-based economies founded on the productive 
resources of cultural difference, change and innovation. For that, a new mode of 
thinking about meaning and semiosis will be essential, one in which individuals 
constantly remake their systems of representation and communication, in productive 
interaction with the challenges of multiple forms of difference.”

**Towards the construction of a new conceptual framework**

In chapter 2, I referred to Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 4) and the metaphor of a 
*bricoleur*, who mixes and matches research methods in accordance with particular 
needs, circumstances and beliefs. This mixing and matching simply reflects choices 
we have in a less restrictive (post) modern world. The comparative researcher, too,
can choose from a range of research methods and approaches. He or she can opt to conduct empirical, qualitative or quantitative, research by conducting interviews or distributing a number of questionnaires with open or closed questions, all appropriate to cross-cultural educational research. In all of these approaches the researcher would question, observe, measure and draw finite conclusions. Alternatively methods such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) offer challenges to the researcher similar to ones used in ethnographic or ethnomethodological research, or indeed, the Delphi method (Linstone, Turoff 1975 referred to in chapter 5. The validity of such research approaches is not being questioned here. Nevertheless, opinions continue to clash. Rust et.al.(1999) seek legitimation and methodological precision. They believe that research methodology ought to be the central focus of comparative studies. In their view, it is the glue that holds the field together as a research community. To support their views, the authors investigated specific references researchers made to chosen methods in a number of journals devoted to comparative education. They found that though research methods remained a central points for those entering the field, the journals under review devoted minimal space to methodological issues. Furthermore, articles which did consider methodological issues, focused almost exclusively on conceptual issues related to comparative methodology rather than practical ones such as the analysis of data. Less than one third of the studies reviewed relied on comparison as a strategy at all (Rust et.al. 1999: 107).

However, methods have to be seen in perspective, that is, in relation to overall intentions and anticipated outcomes. Parallels to teaching come to mind. To most less experienced teachers the ‘method of teaching’ (how do I do this) seems an overriding concern while experienced teachers are often ignore specific methods but concentrate
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on outcomes and student achievement (what do students learn, if I do this). A shift has taken place from the 'me' as the centre of the teaching process to the 'you' as the learner.

Similarly, it can be proposed that comparative research studies, instead of input- and method-oriented, should be flexible, outcome- and meaning-oriented while not neglecting underlying principles and values attached to any scholarly activity. However, such deliberations are valid to all research approaches, and not just comparative ones. The question remains: what is distinctive about 'comparative'?

Denzin and Lincoln (1994), for example, do not include specific comparative methods in their comprehensive *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Beniger (in McLeod and Rosengreen 1992: 47) argues persuasively that the word 'comparative' is redundant in the social sciences and the terms comparative analysis are doubly redundant. All social sciences research is comparative and so too is all analysis. He finds that the term comparative itself harbours preconceptions about what one ought to compare. It is a mind-set that greatly impedes research. One should free oneself of rigid categories and adopt methods that facilitate comparisons in the widest possible sense. Modern communications research could trail the path with the impact information and communication technology and its impact on culture and society. However, following Beniger's line of argument, if there are no research methods specific to comparative studies, then the elements which make these distinct from any other type of research, relate solely, it seems, to the cultural (historical, linguistical) dimensions in a study involving two or more cultural communities and to elements of comparative reflection and evaluation attached to such a process. One might argue, therefore, that without reference to and understanding of cultural forces or other cultural manifestations
between two or more cultural communities such studies become meaningless in comparative terms.

Broadfoot (1999: 227) confirms my thinking: “Power to define the way issues are conceptualised is embodied in the cultural tool of language.” She stresses that there is “a potential rich harvest” for comparative scholars who can use it to explore the different formulations of educational priorities in different cultural settings. In her view, the contemporary challenges facing comparative education call for a new name for the field. “We need a name that recognises increasingly blurred boundaries between education and other areas of life, and equally, the need to blur boundaries between the various social science disciplines in order to provide for a more integrated approach to the study of issues.” She suggests since education is not just about education systems and practices but about ‘learning in society’ comparative education might be better conceptualised as ‘neo-comparative education’ or even ‘comparative learnology’. Such terms would describe a field which would be internationally and interculturally focused (Broadfoot 1999:229). With reference to adult education no easy solutions come to mind: terms such as adult education, lifelong learning or lifelong education, continuing education or adult and/or continuing education have offered a rich source for debate and theorizing. Yet scholars in adult education remain inconsistent in the use of these terms, thereby reflecting a very diverse and barely containable field of study. Terms such as comparative, international, inter-, intra-, crosscultural in combination with those relating to the education of adults perhaps best reflect the type study under discussion. Not to have a precise name, it might be argued, can be an advantage: instead of being
restricted to schools of thoughts and ideologies, the researcher can enjoy the freedom of choice in deciding which of the many routes to pursue.

Watson (1999a: 234), with reference to comparative education, calls for reconceptualisation and fresh insights. He refers to the distinction between comparative and international education (mentioned in chapter 3) and reminds us that comparative education sought to acquire statistical data on which to make comparative and objective judgements about performances of the education system in different countries, whereas international education sought not only to understand education systems within different socio-economic contexts but, stressing normative values in comparisons, also to improve international understanding as a result. There is a danger in the post-modernist approach, Watson argues, that comparatists cease to have anything relevant to say on policy matters, though it helps us to understand the impact of policies on local or marginalised groups, such as ethnic and linguistic groups, nomads or women in many societies, thereby using the discourse of adult educators. Indeed, Watson seeks to break down boundaries:

If comparative and international education is to have any hope of impacting on the challenges facing education into the next century then not only must those involved in the field take stock of its current position but they must be less exclusive, and they must be prepared to build new alliances, or build upon existing alliances, with the wider educational community and with researchers in other disciplines such as economics, political science, international relations and sociology. There needs to be a reassertion of the unique contribution that can be made in terms of historical comparative research (Watson 1999a: 237).

Watson states that comparativists must re-establish their unique role in seeking to understand different cultural contexts if: a) government or agency policies are to be
challenged; and b) costly mistakes are to be avoided in future. Watson thus highlights what to me seems to me a further complexity. For many individual scholars the notion of being able to challenge government or agency policies is a futile venture. Educational agendas are rarely determined on the basis of an individual adult educator's research outcomes. Holme's problem solving approach, as advocated by Knoll (1996a), or those relating to cultural borrowing, are not a realistic option for most and in most circumstances. Individuals can learn from and, if appropriate, reflect on specific practices noted in another cultural community, or choose a theme with a broad view over several countries, and share the gained understanding with others. Here comparative research serves to enhance understanding about different cultural communities, which is in itself a worthwhile task.

Broadfoot (1999:225) classifies comparative education into five broad categories:

1. Studies which provide detailed empirical documentation of educational phenomena in a particular, typically national setting.
2. Studies which provide (1) above but which are contextualised in terms of broader international debates/theoretical frameworks/empirical accounts of issues.
3. Studies which are designed as explicitly comparative, based in a rationale for their selection in order to illuminate 'constants and contexts'.
4. Studies in which the contexts being compared themselves are theorised as part of a wider social science debate on, for example, the relationship between system and action, power and control, culture and the creation of meaning.
5. Studies which use comparative research to inform theory.

This diversity of both subject matter and methodology, she argues, illustrates the difficulties facing comparative education in defining its distinct contribution and field of activity. It is difficult to disagree with such a classification. There is no reason to
assume that it is not equally valid in the context of post-initial education. However, further considerations are justified if its practical dimensions are to be considered.

Jarvis (1996a: 233) reminds us, and I have referred to this at various points throughout this thesis, that continuing education is a product of the prime forces of globalisation—the economic and technological forces generated in advanced capitalist countries by transnational companies in the further development of global forces (see also chapter 1). Many of the forms of continuing education, he continues, are direct responses to the demands this generated although some aspects are constrained by the fact that cultural knowledge changes less rapidly than scientific and technological knowledge. In his development of a theoretical framework for comparative adult education he takes a holistic approach by referring to the structure of the clientele and the learners, the nature of qualifications, the nature providers, the mode of provision and methods of presentation—which is an accepted approach to defining continuing education.

Boucouvalas (in Reischmann, Bron, Jelenc 1999: 67-68) takes a different stance by emphasising the role of the 'self' in relation to knowledge. The 'self' of the researcher is equally important, she argues, to methodological tools and other indicators. She distinguishes between a technician and a scholarly inquirer. A technician would strive for rigorous systematic work and employ rigorous techniques, the work of the scholarly inquirer, on the other hand, requires a commitment to self-knowledge and self-awareness. "So, an examination of the strategies and approaches we use in our research includes the examination of our 'ontos' (to use the Greek word for being-in-the-world), that is, a deeper understanding of the 'self' engaged in the comparison. Boucouvalas emphasises the area of adult cognition which would afford such a
framework to help us begin such a dialogue. She refers to three modes of thinking, developmental in progression: discrete, relativistic and dialectical. Discrete thinking, she argues, is categorical in nature and offers thinking in either/or terms. Perceived reality is often absolute. Relativistic thinking takes into account the contextual nature of the observation and claims and deeply considers the context as part of the analysis. Dialectical thinking apprehends the greater whole of which different, sometimes seemingly antithetical, pieces are part and promotes understanding of complementarity (Boucouvalas in Reischmann, Bron and Jelenc 1999: 68). Dialectical thinking, if intended to promote understanding, raises questions about the purposes of comparative adult education which may be analytical, functional or intrinsically normative – or a combination of all three.

Both, Jarvis and Boucouvalas raise valid points: Jarvis in relation to contexts and issues and Boucouvalas to constructive, relativistic thinking which arises out these contexts. I suggest that any meaningful understanding of comparative adult education has to encompass both aspects. Globalisation and postmodernity, however, have their own propellants which provoke further sets of challenges, particularly in relation to computer-mediated knowledge transfer and communication, professional networking, increased travel and personal and professional contact with people from different cultural backgrounds. To use the metaphor of shopping: there was a time, a time of less choice, when neighbours were likely to meet in the local shop which was open only at certain times and on certain days. Nowadays, neighbours rarely meet in such circumstances. There is plenty of choice, many shops are open day and night making such chance meetings increasingly unlikely. In terms of research, scholars, too, are no longer restricted by traditions, ideologies or schools of thought – which, at least, offer
'meeting places', a sense of security and belonging. Instead, they have a multitude of
choices at their disposal and decisions to make, choices which, on the one hand, can
be difficult to handle, on the other, they can liberate and allow individuals to move
into all sorts of different directions. In practical terms, these choices relate to
phenomena, themes, topics under investigation, to research methods and approaches,
to resources to be used, interactions to be initiated and outcomes to be evaluated.
However, none of these choices can offer solutions without reference to meaning, the
use of language or languages and the socio-cultural environment in which phenomena
are to be found. The 'cultural' component, therefore, rests at the core of all
comparative studies. One cannot look at a phenomenon without reference to its
history, the social and political environment, that is, its origins and impact on a
community.

How does the term 'comparative adult education' fit into this kind of discussion? Is it
not a static, fixed concept that has become redundant in light of shifting conceptions
and the breaking away from institutional boundaries and systems? If there is a sense
of past failures attached to such a term, which I suspect and referred to in chapter 1, it
will be difficult to lift it out of its past 'negative' image. Usher's sense of 'uneasiness'
comes to mind (referred to in chapter 2). Usher, however, also encourages us to be
critical, to make the best of the situation and to employ conceptual resources in order
to develop a discourse of our own. In this sense we should be critical but also
constructive. In this spirit of constructive thinking and on the basis of all previous
explorations I would like to propose that while comparative adult education is perhaps
a neglected 'field', it, nevertheless, merits attention. Neglected fields soon turn into
'moorlands' as previously indicated. At the risk of appearing to reject postmodernist
views, and in order to avoid complete chaos, some kind of boundaries, no matter how loose, should be formulated. After all, even in a globalised world 'moorlands' have such boundaries. The term globalisation, as previously pointed out, is often used very loosely and, indeed, in contradictory ways, so that it has "itself become part of global consciousness, an aspect of the remarkable proliferation of terms centred upon the global" (Robertson 1992: 8). Most, however, accept references to multiple histories and multiple cultures contained within one country and across boundaries of most others. There is an argument to be made that there should be an emphasis on 'intercultural' adult education, stressing the first syllable of intercultural, rather than 'comparative' or 'cross' which embrace notions of opposites to be 'compared'. Friedenthal-Haase (1991) uses the term 'interculturality' which encompasses the multiplicity of value systems and spheres of life related to one another. "Interculturality is not only to be conceived as a social-ethical and political phenomenon; it must also been seen as a fundamental aspect of the historical process, poised as it is between extremes of universality and particularity" (1991:37). Interculturality, however, can no longer be perceived as bound to notions of 'countries' with 'national' as argued previously. Instead, references to 'cultural communities' seem more appropriate and less restrictive. The term 'interculturality', however, differs from 'international' by emphasising normative values and processes not contained in the latter. It is possible to argue that terms such 'comparative and/or international adult education' do not embody the sense of converging mutuality or reflexivity apparent in international networking and collaboration.

Other factors influence 'taking a fresh view' of comparative adult education, all have been referred to in this thesis: as previously stated, relatively few scholars conduct
comparative research in the narrow sense, even fewer apply models of juxtapositioning. Increasingly, however adult education scholars take part in, and contribute, to intercultural projects, networks or conferences, computer-mediated or not – all of which embrace aspects of comparative reflection and evaluation. The following table seeks to illustrate that comparative adult education consists of:

| Studies which aim to | • inform  
|                     | • deepen understanding  
|                     | • develop theory  
|                     | • construct new meaning  
|                     | • solve problems  
| Studies which arise out of | • scholarly research  
|                     | • projects  
|                     | • partnerships  
|                     | • networks  
| Studies with researchers who are | • individual scholars who are monolingual  
|                     | • Individual scholars who are bilingual  
|                     | • groups of scholars, some of whom some are monolingual and others are bilingual  
| Studies which focus on | • explicit comparison  
|                     | • implicit comparison  
|                     | • specificities, depth  
|                     | • overviews, breadth  
| Studies which give | • equal attention to two or more cultural communities  
|                     | • unequal attention to two or more cultural communities  
|                     | • attention to the other (s) cultural community(ies) only  
| Studies which seek to address | • policy makers  
|                     | • the academic community  
|                     | • practitioners  
|                     | • learners  

In other words, in conceptual terms comparative studies can no longer be restricted in terms of comparative analysis between two or more countries, nor simply as empirical
rather than normative, referred to in chapter 3. All empirical research contains elements of what may be considered to be ‘normative’; it is no longer a question of either/orism but one of emphasis and balance. Furthermore, the term research is not precise in meaning. Undertaking research is a process, however, which involves communication with others in either one or two languages, which in itself merits attention. Meaning cannot be constructed without understanding of communication processes or reference to sources used which includes dialogue, narration in both spoken and written form. Computer-mediated information and interaction creates its own sets of questions yet to be answered. Underpinning such a comparative framework, therefore, is a constructivist process and outcome-oriented approach which, I suggest, has to include at least some of the following elements:

- analysis (phenomena, themes, systems, experiences)
- forces (time, space, local, global)
- genre (spoken or written texts, computer-mediated)
- communication (barriers, effectiveness)
- interculturality (cultural/linguistic/historical)
- construction (meaning, knowledge, understanding)
- evaluation (reflexivity, external validation)
- ethics (scholarship, sensitive, critical)

These underlying elements interconnect and cannot be treated in isolation. There may be others not yet considered. However, all of them defy oversimplification in terms of either/orisms. In the postmodern context they no longer permit simple juxtapositioning but have to accommodate volatile converging and diverging forces. Researchers refer to different texts and other sources, as stated before, and depend on effective intercultural communication strategies, so that shared meanings can be
explored and new knowledge be constructed; meaning which is embedded in diverse cultural contexts and knowledge which arises out of the sharing of meaning. The evaluation of such studies in the positivist paradigm depends on claims of internal validity and external validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity. The evaluation of interpretive, constructivist studies, though no less stringent, depends on reflexivity, that is the meaning constructed in relation to the self and on external validation by, in most instances, the academic community. Here ethics matter. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:561) suggest that researchers seek a new body of ethical directiveness fitted to postmodernism. They argue that old ethical codes failed to examine research as a morally engaged project. They never seriously located the researcher within the ruling apparatus of society. “A postmodern, poststructural science will move closer to a sacred science of the moral universe.” Here the study of interculturalists with reference to lifelong learning as a global phenomenon has a serious and worthwhile contribution to make.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have proposed a conceptual framework towards a new understanding of comparative studies in adult education which seeks to more inclusive and hence, as I see it, more appropriate to the complexity of adult education at the beginning of a new century than those established in the 1960s, at time shaped by a range of different priorities and theoretical understandings. In the development of this chapter, I have tried to delineate dimensions which, it seems to me, can make an important contribution in the understanding of intercultural/comparative studies in the contemporary context. Most of these need further exploration if a meaningful
theoretical foundation is to be formulated. In chapter 3, I referred to the tension between what is considered to be the ‘normative’ value in comparison and ‘scientific’ rigour attached to positivist approaches. Constructivist approaches within the interpretive paradigm must not to be in opposition to either. On the contrary, by stressing the construction of meaning, both normative values and ‘scientific’ rigour can be attended to.

Postmodernism, if it has achieved anything at all, has allowed us to break down traditional discipline boundaries. Foucault seems to express this well when he states:

> We must renounce all those themes whose function is to ensure the infinite continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of constantly recurring absence. We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books. Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs (Foucault 1972: 25).

Adult education seems in a particularly good position to explore this new found freedom to its best advantage. As a field of study and practice it well used to sudden irruptions. Comparative studies, therefore, cannot be contained within infinite continuity of its discourse or restrictive paradigms. These have failed researchers over many years. However, more freedom and flexibility might free the spirit of adventure, curiosity and creativity, and hence renew the interest in and pursuit of comparative activities - surely for the benefit of all those with an interest in others.
Chapter 9

Concluding reflections and further questions

In chapter 1, I referred to myself as the traveller in various literal and metaphorical modalities. In other chapters I have referred to myself as a stranger or as a citizen having settled in another country. It would be tempting, therefore, to say something like ‘towards the end of my journey’ or ‘having arrived at’. However, I shall resist such temptations. They would be meaningless in this instance. I do not have a sense of having reached conclusions in the sense of something finite, of having done something and dealt with it. On the contrary: there is a sense of ‘having just arrived in order to do something’, a sense of beginning rather than ending. In order to explain my thinking I intend to look back over the whole thesis and some of the issues raised, to reflect on the questions raised in chapter 1 and outline some of the conclusions reached with the intention of eliciting further questions.

Phenomenology and comparisons

I began this research with a great deal of uncertainty. I was doubtful about the merit of re-examining comparative adult education, which, as I stated in chapter 1, did not seem to have contributed a great deal to discussion in adult education, neither in practical and theoretical terms. Themes such as postmodernity, globalisation, computer-mediated learning, Europeanisation, and ‘the learning society’ were just beginning to be in the forefront of the adult education discourse, it seemed to me at the time (1993-94). Yet for reasons not quite clear to me then, I could not settle on
doing a straightforward comparative research involving both Britain and Germany from the outset. I could not quite see the reason for undertaking such a study. With hindsight and only after having written this thesis, it is clear to me that my initial uncertainties were linked to not having appropriate theoretical frameworks to which I could relate and which were meaningful to me. It is really only now that I would want to start such a comparative venture.

My questions at that time began to centre around the nature of comparison itself. Why undertake such studies? What could be achieved that was worthwhile? Anyway, how would one approach such a study? Comparative methodology seemed to be confined to the Bereday (1964) model of juxtapositioning which did not hold any promise, at least not to me. The fact that I am bilingual did not suffice. Paradoxically, in the end, my own cultural background determined the approach I was to take. As explained in chapter 2, my biculturalism did not allow me to remain outside this study, to remain 'objective' within the positivist understanding of the word. There was no other way, it seemed to me, but to explore a phenomenological approach, an approach which, according to Epstein (in Schriewer and Holmes 1992) was not compatible at all with comparative research in education. There is a logical conclusion to such a statement, which is to say that bicultural researchers cannot undertake comparative research, clearly not a convincing argument. It is tempting to turn Epstein’s thinking up-side-down and state that, indeed, only bicultural researchers can undertake comparative research. Alternatively, scholars, who are not bicultural, should collaborate with researchers from the cultural communities under investigation. Contrary to Epstein’s views, it is my biculturalism, which in the end, sustained my motivation to persevere. Everyday experiences I had in relation to both countries, confirmed a ‘nagging’ sense
of value in undertaking comparative analysis. However, and for the sake of honesty, it needs to be said that biculturalism is not always easy to accommodate in comparative terms. A bicultural person may not always see what is strikingly apparent to others, or alternative, know too much which, in the end, may hinder rather than aid, mutual understanding – rather like an expert in a particular professional field may find it difficult to convey essentials to the layperson, the non-expert.

A further point needs clarification. It concerns the question of *noema* and *noemis*, referred to in chapter 2, and the ‘uniqueness’ of perceptions and experiences, which, it is argued, render all comparisons meaningless. However, it is statement which ends in an intellectual cul-de-sac. Perceptions and experiences are, in one sense, unique, but in another, there are elements in this uniqueness which are common to all. It is the sharing of these experiences and perceptions with others that make the ‘uniqueness’ worthwhile. Processes of reflection and sharing meaning lift us out of this phenomenological cul-de-sac into new ways of perceiving and experiencing, which is the basis of constructivism, in itself at the centre of adult learning theories. Mezirow (1977), for example, talks of ‘perspective transformation’ and ‘meaning schemes’. Adult education, in essence, is about transforming individuals through learning from their experiences. The argument that experiences are unique and cannot be compared is, therefore, difficult to sustain. However, the word ‘compare’ needs further clarification. From the positivist perspective to compare refers to relationships, that is, variables of similarities and differences. Naturalistic inquiry insists that only the measuring of these variables makes comparisons meaningful. It is a methodological understanding of the word. To compare, however, also implies a reflective activity. One cannot be critical and understand without some form of comparative analysis and
reflection. In other words, one cannot learn without comparative reflection. Much depends on the motivation to want to learn.

The question of 'motivation' is rarely fully discussed in the context of comparisons. It is perhaps an aspect I should have explored more fully in this thesis. However, in chapter 8, I referred to Watson (1999) and his plea that comparative studies should inform educational policies, a point, I considered which was not appropriate to all comparative researchers, whose motives might be very different. In chapter 1, I mentioned Pflug (1994) and his frustrations in connection with the teaching of comparative studies. His students lacked motivation, he stated. It is not surprising. Learning theories in adult education, according to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, confirm that adults learn better if they can relate personal experiences to new knowledge. The same applies to comparative studies. Researchers are more likely to be motivated if they can relate to the cultural communities under investigation, or to the topic chosen on the basis of their own professional interest, experience and knowledge. There is, therefore, a 'subjective', phenomenological element attached to almost all comparative studies. It is the phenomenological element that drives the motivation to undertake such a study in the first instance. In practical terms, it is simply easier to write about a country or region one has been to and which has aroused curiosity. The same applies to historical studies. It is easier to look at a period of history of which one has at least some knowledge and understanding. However, researchers rarely clarify their own positions, either explicitly or implicitly, when undertaking comparative research studies. There is an assumption that researchers are 'objective' when, indeed, they are not. Researchers, however, construct their own
meaning, a subjective process, which they then seek to ‘objectify’ in an effort to mediate that meaning to others.

Habermas (1979: 11), referred to in the previous chapter, distinguishes between two levels of meaning:

If the meaning of a written sentence, action, gesture, work of art, tool, theory, commodity, transmitted document, and so on, is unclear, the explication of meaning is directed first to the semantic content of the symbolic formation. In trying to understand its content, we take up the same position as the ‘author’ adopted when he wrote the sentence, performed the gesture, used the tool, applied the theory, and so forth. Often we must go beyond what was meant and intended by the author and taken into consideration a context of which he was not conscious.

In other words, both the author and the audience are involved in processes of interpretation of contexts and meaning from within their own perspective. Neither of them are neutrally ‘objective’. In comparative terms, it is therefore difficult to maintain that phenomenological perspectives cannot be accommodated. On the contrary: these perspectives, one could argue equally forcefully, are its strength rather than its weakness. Bicultural perspectives and interpretation of meaning simple ease the understanding of phenomena in cultural contexts of which the audience has less experience than the researcher.

Questions to be answered

In chapter 1, I raised questions which would underpin this thesis. The first question asked:
• Is there validity in undertaking international comparative studies in adult education at a time when, with expanding globalisation and mass communication systems, societies, organisations and individuals face increasing uncertainties and adult education itself remains a precarious and ill-defined field of study?

I shall answer this question in two parts: a) Yes, there is validity in undertaking international comparative studies, particularly if reconceptualised, and b) there is little value in undertaking comparative studies which seek to analyse national systems in adult education and compare these along the Bereday model, as argued in previous chapters.

In order to outline my thinking further, I will refer to Jarvis’s (1990: 72) definition of comparative adult education (referred to in chapter 3) which I consider to be too restrictive. He states, it is worth recalling, that comparative study is about the “study of adult education systems and policies”, and that it is an empirical form of research rather than a normative one. I would add that it is about much more.

In this thesis I have been trying to develop the argument that comparative adult education has to accommodate more than just empirical research. Post-, late or reflexive modernity liberates us from thinking in ‘either/or’ terms. It is not a matter of either empirical or normative orientations but of one which includes elements of both, allowing for differences in emphasis and balance. Comparative research, if it means anything at all, needs to include references to cultural differences and similarities,
again not as opposing constructs but in the sense of differences within similarities and so on. Hannerz (in King 1991: 107) states aptly:

Humankind has finally bid farewell to that world which could with some credibility be seen as a cultural mosaic, of separate pieces with hard well-defined edges. Because of the great increase in the traffic in culture, the large-scale transfer of meaning systems and symbolic forms, the world is increasingly becoming one not only in political and economic terms, as in the climactic period of colonialism, but in terms of its cultural construction as well; the global ecumene of persistent cultural interaction and exchange.

It is therefore no longer meaningful to use comparative studies solely as a measuring tool for separate pieces with hard well-defined edges. Crossley (1999: 250) writes about a resurgence of interest in comparative and international studies in education, a resurgence which was not apparent when I began this thesis. He states that the time is “ripe for a comprehensive reconceptualisation of the field as a whole.” He refers to issues which I have also touched upon such as the intensification of globalisation; growth in international exchange programmes; advances in information and communications technology; demand for linkages between educational research, policy and practice; postmodern challenges to dominant theoretical frameworks; and the symbolic impact of the turn of the new century. He raises other points in relation to mainstream educational research and the need to adopt cross-disciplinary frameworks thereby recognising that can learn much from the experiences of others.

“Central to the thesis developed here is the argument that the increasingly rapid pace of socio-economic changes demands vastly improved communication and interchange between human groups, organisations and cultures world-wide. This includes professional cultures, international agencies, specialists, policy makers, practitioners, the general public and researchers across all disciplines and fields. Such cross-cultural
bridging is essential if we are to better conceptualise and understand the dramatic changes that contemporary globalisation processes have set in train” (page 257). In chapter 8 I have tried to do just that. My aim was to develop a much more inclusive and flexible framework appropriate to adult education. Increasingly, however, differences between adult education (post school) and initial (school) education become less distinct. I have referred to some of these differences in chapters 3 and 4 and argued that comparative education no longer confines itself to school-related issues. Comparative adult education, which has not yet involved itself in school matters, nevertheless also tackles issues in further and higher education, which are also of interest in comparative education. Perhaps the future of comparative adult education lies not such much in being distinct with an identity of its own but in seeking allies and an intellectual home?

In this thesis I have focussed on aspects of language, languages, communication and culture because they relate closely to my own area of expertise and interest. These are themes which of late have also entered debates in comparative education (see Hoffman 1999, Broadfoot 1999, Kress 1996 among others), areas which in comparative adult education were taken up by Friedenthal-Haase (1991), Siddiqui (1993) and Jütte (1992), although all from very different perspectives. These are themes which merit further investigation and research, particularly at a time when, as Robertson points out (in King 1991: 71), because of “the compression of the world, in which its most formidable units - namely nationally constituted societies – are increasingly subject to the internal, as well as external constraints of multiculturality.”
There is a second point to my initial question: I refer to adult education as a field of study that is 'precarious and ill-defined'. However, much depends on one's understanding of adult education, as previously argued. While in terms of its epistemology there remains validity to such a statement, and in institutional, structural terms adult education is increasingly less easy to define, in terms of policy and public awareness 'lifelong learning' has rarely enjoyed such a high profile in numerous countries, certainly in Europe but also across the globe. The concept of 'lifelong learning' is emphasised in the Delors Report, the EU White Papers, and the Green and White Paper in England. However, its significance was not quite so apparent to me when I first began thinking about this research. As pointed out in chapter 7, a shift has taken place away from the institution to the individual in the global context and in light of increasing technological and environmental demands made on individuals. Notions of 'lifelong learning' offer a way of out negative reflexivity towards positive construction. Seen from this angle, adult education has a great deal to offer, not only to society as a whole, but also to other academic disciplines including comparative education.

The third part of my first question relates to increasing 'globalisation and mass communication systems' which challenge previously held notions about comparative adult education, but which also give meaning to further exploration. In chapter 4, I investigated concepts and realities of nationhood, national identity and national characteristics, concepts which have become increasingly blurred with increasing globalisation. Giddens (1990:14) argues that all modern states have clearly defined boundedness, but that all societies are interwoven with ties and connections which crosscut the sociopolitical system of the state and the cultural order of the nation.
Furthermore, globalisation can be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local events are shared by communities many miles away and vice versa. Car manufacturing, a source of some controversy between Britain and Germany, offers a good example. In this instance global capitalist market-led forces clash with those representing local needs and local culture. "This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanciated relations that shape them" (Giddens 1990: 64). In a cross-cultural context local communities and global forces interconnect. Without some kind of comparative analysis and reflection it is difficult to understand such processes or the people who are experiencing these. However, processes of comparative reflection require inter-or cross-cultural communication and an appreciation of differences and similarities, as a basis on which to construct shared meaning in the spirit of trust and mutuality.

In chapter 5, I looked at developments in Europe, particularly at collaboration and networking both of which are aided by computer-mediated communication systems and the transfer of information. It is difficult nowadays to remember times without emails, computers, let alone television and other forms of electronic communication. Hiltz and Turoff (1993) in this context suggest that instead of thinking of a nation or society as a collection of communities we need to think of it as a set of overlapping networks of actual and potential communication and exchange. In that sense we have already begun to be a network nation. Networks, in the words of Castells (1996) create new forms and channels of communication, shaping life and being shaped by life at the same time. Castells refers to a set of ‘interconnected nodes’ in this context. Network societies are built on trust and a renewed era of democratic participation,
none of which can be achieved without an appreciation of differences and similarities on the basis of comparative reflection and understanding. Seen in this light, the need for comparative research is more pressing than ever before if these processes are to be eased and barriers are to be dismantled.

To answer my first question then: Yes, there is, "validity in undertaking international comparative studies in adult education", now more so than perhaps ever before.

My second question asks: if there is such a validity, what methods and approaches are appropriate and of relevance to adult educators nowadays?

Here my answer is: any method that suits the researcher and the question he or she seeks to address. However, an understanding of paradigms and the relationship of the self in such an undertaking will help to clarify one’s own thinking and make the mediation of meaning easier for the community the researcher is aiming to address.

In chapters 2 and 8, I addressed the issue of methods and the fact that most researchers use a variety of approaches. Patton (1990:89) refers to the world of pragmatics and practice in this context. A preoccupation with methodological precision can be stifling. Nevertheless, comparative research studies, which are based on an empirical quantitative design and involve statistics and correlations, are more method-focused, than studies which are phenomenological in approach. Here comparative research does not differ from any other type of research, except for the attention the researcher has to pay to cultural representations in terms of history and language. Matters are made more complex if the researcher does not share the language spoken by members of the cultural community under investigation, or if
texts are presented in a language not shared by the researcher (some researchers, however, develop sound reading skills in the other language, a point not further explored). Here the researcher will have to find ways of coping for the sake of authenticity.

All comparative research studies involving two or more cultural communities, however, need to share a common denominator in terms of either location or time. The study may a historical one, or one, where two or more geographically separated communities are compared. The comparison may be, in the words of Husén and Postelthwaite (1994), ‘implicit’ or ‘explicit’, though within the interpretive paradigm, it is by nature ‘implicit’. Here the researcher does not give equal attention to both phenomena compared but seeks to exercise his or her own judgement on the basis of knowledge and experience. However, the researcher’s perception of what seems noteworthy and what not, the tension between the implicit and explicit, is to some extent dependent on the researcher’s location. To give an example, had I written this thesis in Germany it is likely that I would have concentrated on the British perspective, more so than I did writing it in England, where anything German seems to have aroused more of my interest (unintentionally so). This particular point has to been seen in relation to Gidden’s notion (1990) ‘embedding and disembedding’ or time-space distanciation, and Harvey’s (1989) of the compression of time and the volatility which makes planning difficult, all issues which become more complex in the context of comparative studies and which researchers need to take into account.

My final question, as stated in chapter 1, asks: how can I make comparative adult education meaningful to myself in the first instance but also meaningful to others.
Again, there are several dimensions to that question: the ‘to myself’ part relates to my interest in both Britain and Germany and what comparative adult education means in this context. Both Beck (1992:3) and Giddens (1990:36) talk of ‘reflexive modernity’ which, in Giddens’ words, keeps human beings in touch with the grounds of what they do as an integral part of what they are doing. He calls this ‘reflexive monitoring of action’, which seems an appropriate way of looking at comparative studies.

“Reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character. We should be clear about the nature of this phenomenon. All forms of social life are partly constituted by actors; knowledge of them” (page 38). Comparing something in relation to something else is an act of reflexivity, and hence part of modernity, even late modernity. Habermas (1979: 3), as stated before, emphasises the need to reach an understanding (Verständigung). He argues that the goal of coming to an understanding [Verständigung] is to bring about agreement [Einverständnis]. With regard to adult education in both Britain and Germany, there is a sense that both countries are moving in the same direction, albeit at a different pace, and that a convergence between systems, philosophies and practices is an inevitable outcome of the globalisation and Europeanisation processes. This assumption is plausible since many adult educators speak good English and read much of the Anglo-American literature. This, however, is an oversimplified way of understanding another country and culture. There are profound and marked differences. German adult education literature is extensive, yet very little crosses the Anglo-American divide. Oskar Negt (1971), one of the most influential thinkers in German adult education, for example, is almost unknown in this country. Other examples can be found. In chapter 7, I stated that an
understanding of historical developments in both countries is unavoidable. Without reference to, for example, the effects of both World Wars, or Humboldt’s influence on educational thought, the origins and developments of adult education in both countries, which determined not only policies and legislative frameworks, institutions and structures but also ways of perceiving and understanding given phenomena. The study of texts (Tuchmann in Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Moustakas 1994 among others) in terms of hermeneutics has to be considered in any discussion on the nature of comparisons. The answer to the question how comparative adult education could be meaningful to myself centres around points which Sztompka (in Albrow and King 1990) raised when he refers to the preservation of enclaves of uniqueness amid growing homogeneity and uniformity. He suggests paying attention to what is distinct, to peculiarities of meaning and to specificities in depth with sensitivity towards language and history. Sztompka perhaps catches best what comparative adult education would mean to me in relation to Britain and Germany.

However, the second part of that question relates to how I could make my understanding meaningful to others. It seems paradoxical to write at length about the need to share meaning (in chapters 2 and 8) without attempting to so myself. My views, then, need to be challenged, perhaps changed or adjusted to accommodate new knowledge and meaning in the spirit of collaboration and mutuality, a venture yet to be undertaken. However, the sharing of meaning would have to include references to language and culture in the context of adult education and in light of advancing globalisation affecting both countries in similar ways. My intention would be to ease understanding and to dismantle misunderstandings, even prejudice or parochialism prevalent in both countries, but not at the expense of scholarship appropriate to the
academic community of adult educators. Above all, however, I would like to share a sense of optimism which I have rediscovered in the course of this thesis. Williamson (1998: 189) emphasises the need for dialogue. Dialogue is at the heart of successful learning, he states, and of the successful open society. It is a key concept of lifelong learning, and, I would like to add, in intercultural relations and hence appropriate in the context of comparative adult education.

Further questions to be asked

The initial questions that come to mind centre around: what could I have done differently? What should I have considered and did not? There is a sense that I have touched upon on a number of issues somewhat superficially which, with hindsight, might have benefited from further exploration. Perhaps, however, it is too soon to answer such questions. Given time, I might refer to areas in relation to computer-mediated learning and knowledge transfer, which I would like to address in a different context. Similarly, the area of cross-cultural communication is a complex one. Adult education depends on meaningful dialogue in equal partnership with learners. Anyone undertaking a comparative study will engage in dialogue, computer-mediated or face-to-face, with members of both cultural communities, even when dialogue in itself is not part of the research design.

In the course of researching and writing this thesis I found myself increasingly interested in the processes of comparative studies. What do researchers actually do in the process of researching? How do they communicate? What causes misunderstanding and confusion? Other questions arise: are communication
difficulties, those that do exist, more marked between the north and south divide in Europe rather than between two countries such as Britain and Germany? To what extent are these dependent on the command of the English language? Nuissl (1997), in the context of the MOPED report, made references about the evaluation of such processes which, in his view, needed further consideration, points which merit investigation in the context of redefining comparative adult education. Only by really understanding what actually happens in comparative ventures can one begin to formulate a theoretical foundation which would ensure further developments. There may well be other points to consider. It is an ongoing process.

Writing thesis, however, has also clarified further issues in my mind. In chapter 1, I referred to the sense of tension and dichotomy I perceived in relation to theories and practices in language teaching on the one hand, and adult education on the other. It is only now that I can see these disparate fields merge into a meaningful relationship. Such a combination has a great deal to offer to the comparative education, particularly in terms of language and intercultural education. Furthermore, my sense of ‘connectedness’ to both Britain and Germany has meshed into a determination to pursue this area of comparative research, and not only theorize about the nature comparative adult education.

Jarvis (1992b:246) refers to the story of the Garden of Eden in which power was exercised the keep its inhabitants from learning. “It might be argued that ignorance is bliss and that keeping people in ignorance may sometimes be morally acceptable, so that the story the very first learning act was one of disobedience. Thus learning is always problematic.” However, it is through learning that people grow and develop,
Jarvis continues. Here comparative adult education has much to offer in trying to raise questions and find answers. But as Jarvis states, "beyond answers to questions lie more questions and answers and yet more questions lie beyond answers and these also demand answers. Learning, then, typifies the human condition and is part of the human quest – one that is bound to remain unsatisfied within the bounds of time."

These seem fittings words with which to end this dissertation.
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