

Reflection – EDRS 873
Education Policy: Comparative & International Perspectives
Dr. Valerie Sutter
Fall 2009

This course focused on comparative education and was one of the three I had during the fall of 2009. It was also the course I had immediately following EDRS 811 and often, I was thankful to arrive at this class and be able to allow my brain to work “more normally and more comfortably” as I often did not feel my brain was working this way in EDRS 811.

Dr. Sutter focused the course on several areas with our readings and then encouraged us to develop a research topic of our own for a final paper. We read longer texts on China, South Africa, and then the philosophy of Paulo Freire, writing reactions for each and applying them to our own perceptions of education or our own areas of research. We also read two anthologies about education, each with chapters devoted to specific countries.

When it came time for my final paper, I decided to research the differences in paths to higher education in the United Kingdom (UK), specifically the A-level examination system and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Although I already had good knowledge of the IBDP, I did not quite know how this fit in with the college application process and what is known as “clearing” in the UK. Also, I was aware that students applied to colleges differently in the UK than in the United States but wanted to know more about this process and thought I would learn it by completing a paper in this manner. To add an additional twist to the paper, I created two hypothetical students with hypothetical career aspirations and wrote their stories. This involved researching possible universities they might apply to, looking at particular university requirements and learning about deadlines and benchmarks for specific majors. I also had to not only learn about the A-level examinations, but the Universities College and Admissions Service (UCAS), a central agency which handles all college admissions applications for students in the UK, something very different than anything we have in the United States. For this reason, I have chosen this paper to represent my work in this course.