



Comparative social policy and policy transfer

Author: Dr. Majella Kilkey

Criminology and Sociological Studies (CASS)
University of Hull

What are the links between teaching and research ?

The lecturer develops students' appreciation of research/consultancy in the discipline by using teaching and learning processes which simulate research processes.

Context:

Course title: BA Social Policy and Social Justice (UG)

Module title: Comparative Social Policy

Level: 6

Year: 3

Module aims:

The module aims for Comparative Social Policy are to:

- encourage students to appreciate the rationale for a comparative approach to the study of social policy
- enable students to understand the main theoretical approaches to explaining the development and contemporary character of welfare states in other countries
- encourage students to apply such frameworks critically to an examination of the responses of other countries to some key contemporary social policy issues
- introduce students to the role of the European Union and other supranational organisations in the field of social policy.

Module structure:

The module comprises the following lectures, which have parallel tutorial sessions:

- *Introducing comparative Social Policy: why adopt a comparative approach?*
- *Typologising western welfare states: 'mainstream' approaches*
- *Gendering welfare states: feminist critiques of the 'mainstream' approaches*
- *The European Union and Social Policy: The emergence of a social dimension in the 'European Project'*
- *Globalisation, global organisations and Social Policy: converging welfare states?*

- *'Race' and Immigration in Europe: a 'fortress Europe'?*
- *Changing families and policy responses: a comparative perspective; responding to unemployment*
- *The reconciling work and family-life agenda in Europe and beyond*
- *Combating poverty and social exclusion: policy responses.*

Comparative social policy and policy transfer

Assessment:

The policy-transfer case-study report is the second of the module's two assessments, and is intended to assess students' understanding across a range of areas. In the report students are expected to:

- demonstrate knowledge of an area of social policy / or the policy response to a current social 'problem' in the United Kingdom and two other countries
- identify the main ways in which the policy area or policy response differs across the three countries
- demonstrate knowledge of the historical, social, economic and political context in which the policy or policy response has developed in each of the three countries, and knowledge of the differences in the three countries' contexts
- demonstrate an awareness of the outcomes or consequences of the policy area or policy response in each of the three countries, and an awareness of how outcomes/ consequences differ across the three countries critically assess whether, and if so, which, lessons can be learned for the
- United Kingdom from the policy or policy response of the two other countries.

Support materials:

In addition to material presented in lectures and tutorials, support materials for the assessment include:

- the module booklet, with its detailed reading lists, list of relevant on-line resources, etc.
- a set of guidelines for the assessment which includes a statement on the aims of the report and advice on the focus and content of the report
- a pro-forma specifying both countries and topic of interest, which all students are expected to complete in advance of beginning preparation for the assessment. This is designed to enable the lecturer to check on the feasibility and appropriateness of the focus, to provide a basis upon which to offer individual guidance on resources, etc. and to match students with shared interests in order to encourage peer support.

Progression and development

The assessment is also supported by:

- a set of two tutorials specifically given over to advice/consultation/discussion of the assessment, in which there is the opportunity for individual support, as well as peer support
- a library-based session, run jointly by the lecturer and an appropriately trained librarian, which is designed to make students aware of sources of relevant material (for example, the European Documentation Centre at the University of Hull and on-line resources for European and international material), as well as appropriate data-management techniques.

Hot tips:

'Students need to be made aware that this cannot be a 'last minute' assessment, it requires a long-lead in time in terms of deciding on focus and garnering the appropriate resources. Students can be facilitated to 'think early' about the assessment by use of the pro-forma (see above), the tutorial sessions and the library-based session.'

'This is an assignment which works best with relatively small numbers (20-25), as it can be quite resource intensive in terms of lecturer's time.'

'Something similar was tried on a level 5 module, but students found it too challenging. It seems to work well in level 6, when students are also doing a dissertation, so becoming more comfortable with independent learning of this kind.'

Feedback:

Student evaluation is positive. In particular, students highlight the confidence gained in information searching, which they then use to support their dissertations. Although initially daunting for some, they also express enthusiasm for having more freedom to define the focus of their work. Some say that it has encouraged them to think about spending time living in their 'preferred' country. Others have drawn the experience to support future job applications, as well as applications for postgraduate study.

Problems/issues:

There have been three main issues. Firstly, some of the class groups have been too large. Secondly, some students were leaving assessment to the 'last minute' and consequently having insufficient time to complete. Thirdly, keeping students' expectations about the level and type of knowledge they can gain about the other countries in the time available realistic can be a challenge.



The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Social Policy and Social Work (SWAP)
University of Southampton School of Social Sciences
Southampton
SO17 1BJ



Printed on recycled paper