Critical Review

What is policy? In search of frameworks and definitions for non-Western contexts

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Contextualization

The paper is a part of a PhD study that focused on the introduction of standardised testing (sic. *external independent assessment*) in Ukraine. To gain a better understanding of the policy process in post-Communist settings, the study examined the policy process from four perspectives, essentially those of *policy outcomes*, *policy rationalities*, *actor subjectivities* and *power*. The analysis was informed by two academic traditions: policy sociology and governmentality studies. In line with the policy sociology tradition, this research adopted a critical stance in examining policy. From the field of governmentality studies this research borrowed its conceptual apparatus, in particular the concepts of 'governmentality', 'subjectivity', 'conduct of conduct', 'conduct of self and others', 'technologies of domination', and 'technologies of self' (Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991; Doherty, 2007; Fimyar, 2008a, 2008b; Foucault, 1991; Peters, Besley, & Olssen, 2009). This article offers a critical reflection on the application of Western definitions of policy in non-Western contexts.

Abstract: *This paper provides a critical review of the definition of 'policy' that can be used in researching educational transformations in non-Western contexts. It begins with an overview of major debates in policy sociology including the conceptualisations of* policy as process*,* policy as text *and* discourse*. It then moves on to discuss the models of policy-making articulated in social and political science disciplines. The factors influencing policy-making beyond the realm of the nation-state and the shifts in education policy in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries are considered next. It concludes with reflection on the concept of 'dissimulation', which is vital to understanding the complexities of non-Western contexts which existing (i.e. Western) theories of policy-making do not take into account.*

Introducing the field: Policy disciplines and their critiques

The search for a working definition of 'policy' for the study of non-Western education policies relies heavily on the frameworks and definitions proposed by Western scholars. Ethical and methodological considerations emanating from this exercise, although critical, lie beyond the scope of this paper (for an introduction to the debate see, for example, Fimyar, 2011 and Stenning and Hörschelmann, 2008). Being aware of East/West structural, language and conceptual divides and inequalities, this paper pursues more pragmatic objectives. It aims to assist novice researchers navigating the field of policy sociology in finding a definition of 'policy' appropriate to non-Western contexts. I shall begin by outlining the development in the field of policy sociology.

Policy sociology is a relatively new discipline. Begun in the early 1950s as a 'policy orientation' in the social sciences (Lasswell, 1951, cited in Codd, 1988), the field of policy analysis has generated ongoing discussion of its objectives and methods of inquiry. Nowadays policy is an object of analysis in a number of disciplines. Taylor (1997) cites three distinct academic traditions in which this is the case: *political science*, *public administration*

and *policy sociology*; whereas Ozga (2000, p. 38) distinguishes between *policy analysis, policy science* and *implementation studies*. The problem with these terms, she claims, is that they are used interchangeably and without "clear identification of points of difference" (Ozga, 2000). Gale (2001, p. 380) notes three other names given to the field by the policy researchers. These are *critical policy analysis* (Henry, 1993; Marshall, 1997; Prunty, 1985; Taylor, 1997), *critical policy scholarship* (Grace, 1998), and the most widely accepted term *policy sociology* (Ball, 1990; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Maguire & Ball, 1994; and Ozga, 1987).

Within and between these traditions there are different types and objectives of policy analysis. For example, from Ham and Hill's (1984, p. 11) – positivist - perspective, policy analysis seeks to interpret the causes and effects of governmental actions with a specific focus on policy formation, i.e. the initial stage of policy-making whereby policies are contested and shaped by various communities of actors involved in the reform. For Gordon, Lewis & Young (1977, p. 27), the popular distinction between analysis *for* policy and analysis *of* policy is important to understanding the different forms and objectives of policy research:

a) *analysis for policy advocacy*, preoccupied with specific policy recommendations;

b) *information for policy*, the main function of which is to revise actual policies;

c) *analysis of policy determination and effects,* which examines the factors and processes shaping policies, i.e. the policy formation stage;

d) *analysis of policy content,* which examines the values, assumptions, ideologies and discourses that underpin policies.

Another classification for policy research is put forward by Maguire and Ball (1994, pp. 278–281). These authors distinguish between three broad directions of policy research in the UK: *elite studies,* otherwise known as 'situated studies of policy formation' (Gale, 2001, p. 384), *trajectory studies* and *implementation studies.* However, Gale (2001) does not support the attempt to separate implementation studies into a distinct category, arguing that separation of policy formulation from implementation stages leads to theoretical weaknesses.

Comparing the scope of analysis in *elite studies* and *policy trajectory studies*, Maguire and Ball (1994, p. 26) explain that in contrast to *elite studies*, which primarily focus on the level of policy formation, *policy trajectory studies* "employ a cross-sectional approach by tracing policies from formation through to implementation stages". Trajectory studies, as the name implies, analyse all levels of policy process: from policy formulation, to the struggle and response from within the state itself, through to the various recipients of policy. Bowe et al. (1992) make important contributions to the theoretical understanding of policy trajectory studies by drawing distinctions between such levels of analysis as *the context of influence*, *the context of policy text production* and *the contexts of practice*. Further, Ball (1994a, p. 26) proposes two more contexts for analysis: *the context of outcomes* and *the context of political strategy*. Both *policy trajectory studies* and *implementation studies* employ interviews, case studies and observations as methods (Taylor, 1997, p. 42). Despite this variety, Maguire and Ball (1994) note that much of policy research has been methodologically unsophisticated, with issues of language and meaning often taken for granted.

Thus, in the course of its development, policy sociology has been exposed to criticism from within and outside the field. Further examples of criticism include Troyna's comment (1994, p. 71) on the advantages of the multidisciplinary nature of policy sociology. While Henry (1993 cited in Gale, 2001, p. 381) is critical of 'theoretical eclecticism', evident in Ball's 'toolbox' approach to policy analysis (1994a, 1994b); Raab (1994, p. 23) notes the lack of a "clearly distinctive approach" in policy sociology. Troyna (1994, p. 82) takes this criticism

further by claiming that the main problem in the field is the absence of "a particular strategic edge". Ball (1990, p. 9) summarises these criticisms by noting that "the field of policy analysis is dominated by commentary and critique rather than by research".

Responding to the above criticisms, in recent years the field of education policy sociology has been transformed. It has witnessed the emergence and proliferation of a new distinct analytical tradition, which can be named *studies of policy discourses*. What sets these studies aside from the previous works is the close attention to language, discourse and socio-political context that contributes to the emergence of policies. The recent works in this tradition includes the studies by Ball (2008), Fimyar (2010), Peters (2004; 2006), Peters and Humes (2003), Tikly (2003), Maguire (2004), Simons (2007), Besley and Peters (2007) and others.

Definitions of Policy

This section offers a brief discussion of the different notions of policy that can be employed in policy research. We shall start with Ball's (1994a, p. 15) observation that the largest problem many analysts face is the failure to conceptually define 'policy'. This failure results in taking the meaning of policy 'for granted' and leads to weaknesses in "the analytical structure of research" (Ball, 1994a, p. 15). In order to avoid criticism, anyone embarking on analysis of policy should approach the task of selecting a working definition of policy seriously.

A positivist view of *policy as product* of governmental action is one that many find conceptually lacking and methodologically limited. Acknowledging this criticism, a post-structuralist approach views policy-making as extending beyond the work of official (state) institutions and involving both the material and discursive contexts in which policy is made. Ozga (2000, p. 113) argues that policy involves not only policy directives but "negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy-making". Further Ozga explains:

> *Education policy is not confined to the formal relationships and processes of government, nor only to schools and teachers and legislation affecting them. The broad definition [of policy] requires that we understand it in its political, social and economic contexts, so that they also require study because of the ways in which they shape education policy.* (Ozga, 2000, p. 113)

Relevant to the above definition of policy is Stephen J. Ball's definition, which emphasises a dual conceptualisation of *policy as text* and *policy as discourse* (Ball, 1994a).

Policy as Text

Perceiving *policy as text*, as Ball argues, rests upon the findings of literary theory, which views policies as:

> representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors, interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context). (Ball, 1994a, p. 16)

The texts themselves are the products of multiple agendas and compromises. As Ball puts it (1994a, p. 16) "[the texts] are cannibalized products of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas". For Ball, however, that claim does not imply a pluralist approach to policy, because alternative views or approaches are already excluded at the initial stages of policy formation.

In addition, the problem of policy interpretation is complex because "at all stages of the policy process we are confronted both with different interpretations" (Ball, 1994a, p. 17) and with 'interpretations of interpretations' (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). This confusion leads to what Ball (1994a) defines as "a play *in* and play *of* meanings". Ball (*ibid.*) claims that *policy as text* reflects the view of policy as a product of compromises between different agendas and interests. Moreover, policies are never complete; hence a researcher is always dealing with a particular piece of policy which should be considered in connection with other policy texts and the history of responses to policy.

Policy as Discourse

Although insightful, the definition of *policy as text*, prevents us from recognising what Ozga (2000) calls a 'bigger picture', which comprises not only what policy-makers think and incorporate into policy agendas but also what they do not think or deliberately exclude from it. Taking these criticisms on board, Ball (1994a, p. 21) suggests that policy is not only a text, but also a power relation, whereby power is exercised through 'a *production* of truth and knowledge, as discourses'. In his understanding of *policy as discourse* Ball draws on Foucault's popular definition:

> *discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. [...] Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intention.* (Foucault, 2002a, p. 49)

Ball adds to this definition that discourses are not only about what can be articulated and thought but also "about who can speak, when, where and with what authority" (Ball, 1994a, p. 22). According to Foucault (1971, pp. 11–12), discourses are coupled with "desire and power" and are "irreducible to language and to speech" (Foucault, 2001, p. 49). The relationship between discourses and subjects who speak these discourses is described by Ball as follows:

> *We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. [..] we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies.* (Ball, 1994a, p. 22)

Expanding on Ball's view, Trowler (1998, p. 132) emphasises that discourse not only represents a social reality but also disguises its created nature by denying the alternatives. This is how Trowler elaborates this point:

> *Policy-makers, then, can and do constrain the way we think about education in general and specific education policies in particular, through the language in which they frame policies. The use of discursive repertoires drawn from business, marketing and finance is one of the ways by which this is accomplished. Franchising, credit accumulation, delivery of learning outcomes, the possession of skills and competences, skills audit and the rest can become part of everyday discourse and begin to structure the way people think about education. Perhaps most importantly, they work to exclude other possible ways of conceptualizing the nature of education.* (Trowler, 1998, p. 133)

According to Ball's approach, the effect of policy is primarily discursive as it changes and excludes the possibilities for thinking otherwise, thus limiting our responses to change (Ball, 1994a, p. 23). However, Foucault sees not only an imposition and domination in the work of a discourse, but also the possibility for resistance, because "discourse can be both an

instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1998, p. 101).

Policy as an Authoritative Allocation of Values: Whose values?

Apart from the focus on language and power, the definition of *policy as discourse* emphasises the political and value-laden nature of policy (Taylor, 1997, p. 27). Approaching policy from the perspective of values, Taylor draws on Easton's old but influential definition of policy as "a web of decisions and actions that allocates values" (Easton, 1953, pp.129-130 cited in Taylor, 1997, p. 27) Prunty expands Eaton's definition to include 'authoritative' as in 'authoritative allocation of values' thus emphasising the fact that power and control are at the centre of the policy process (Prunty, 1985, p. 136).

Depending on the group that controls the allocation of values, policy research distinguishes between four distinct ways of theorising policy formation: the *pluralist*, the *elitist*, the *neo-Marxist* and the *feminist*. The pluralist approach stands in a certain opposition to all other approaches for its somewhat naïve and idealistic view of policy as an arena of consensus, whereby the state acts as a neutral mediator between the competing interest groups (McPherson & Raab, 1988). All other approaches view policy as a process dominated by conflict rather than consensus, whereby only certain groups of actors exercise control over policy formation. For example, the *elitist approach* sees policy-making as a prerogative of elite power groups, whereas *feminist approaches,* while drawing on and incorporating the elements of the pluralist, the elitist or neo-Marxist approaches, envisage and criticise the state as a machinery for reproducing male interests and power (Taylor, 1997, p. 27). At the centre of *Neo-Marxist critique* is a state hegemony and innate social inequalities embedded in the social organisation of Western societies in the late (neo-liberal) stage of capitalism.

Policy literature also highlights the tension between studies which put the state at the centre of their analysis and critique and those focusing exclusively upon the places where policy is implemented. These two analytical frameworks are commonly known as *state-centric* and *policy-cycle* approaches. The polarity between the frameworks, as well as the frameworks themselves, comes under strong criticism in the policy sociology tradition. These criticisms can be briefly summarised drawing on the works of Raab (1994) and Bowe et al. (1992). According to Raab (1994), the main limitation of state-centric approaches is the lack of attention to the role of the individual agency in decision-making. Whereas, in Bower et al.'s (1992) view the lack of attention to the macro-political level of analysis is the main limitation of *policy-cycle* approaches.

Theorising Policy-Making at the Level of the State: Insights from political sciences

Having illuminated the major definitions of policy in the fields of policy sociology, the discussion now moves to the question of how policy-making is theorised at the level of a nation-state. Addressing this question we come closer to the key concern raised in this paper, i.e. the possibilities and pitfalls of applying the theories developed for the analysis of liberal states for the study of policy in non-liberal traditions. Until the 1990s attempts to theorise the policy process were sporadic. This is partly due to the fact that public policy analysis and educational policy sociology enjoyed the status of applied disciplines with the pluralist view of policy dominating the debate. The question of an overall policy environment including the issues of language and power were left unaddressed (McNay & Ozga, 1985, pp. 1–3).

Even today the policy sociology literature is primarily concerned with different approaches to policy definition, rather than analysis of the factors influencing policy-making. The alternative policy-making theories remain marginalised, with the exception of those of a few recent

publications in which the system, network and elite theories are starting to be addressed (Ball, 2004, 2009a, 2012; Ozga, 2005; Stone, 2001).

Drawing on the insights from political science discipline, Edmondson's policy-making typology (2005) provides a good starting point for analysis of the policy-making in education. In developing her model, Edmondson draws on Theodoulou and Cahn's earlier work (1994) summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1. Theodoulou & Cahn (1994) Policy-Making Typology. Adapted from Edmondson (2005, p. 3)

Theory	Description	Theorists
Pluralism	Policy is a struggle among various (social, economic, ethnic, etc.) groups in society	Dahl (1968) and Truman (1993)
Elite Theory	Policies are made by relatively small groups of influential leaders who share similar beliefs	Mills (1956); Milliband, (1973)
Corporatism	Policy-making is influenced by interest groups which are part of the decision-making and implementation system	Schmitter and Lehmbruch (1979)
Sub-governments	Sections of government work with interest groups to develop policies around specialised areas of interest.	Heclo (1978)

Although informative, Edmondson (2005, pp. 10–13) finds each of the above four models of policy-making problematic. The main target of criticism is that none of these models takes into account the role of practitioners in policy formation. To overcome this theoretical shortcoming, Edmondson puts forward a *critical pluralism theory* that suggests ways of understanding the greater involvement of teachers in educational policy-making. According to this theory, policies are defined as value-laden human constructions which represent 'authoritative visions of society' and the process of such construction should strive for a greater understanding of the involvement of teachers in the decision-making process. Undeniably, critical pluralism theory is an interesting addition to theoretical discussion of policy-making models. However, the practical realisation of this model is problematic.

Another way of looking at policy process is offered by Kingdon's 'garbage can model' of policy-making. What is particularly appealing in Kingdon's account, in which he draws on the earlier work by Cohen et al. (1972), is a rejection of the view of policy-making as a rational activity: a view that dominates Edmodson's typology presented above. Rather, Kingdon emphasises the irrational and contingent nature of the policy process (1995, pp. 109–111). The 'garbage can' metaphor, better than any other, captures the constructed nature of policy process. The model envisages that policy 'problems' and policy 'solutions' float in a 'garbage can'-like policy space until they are 'coupled' in a coherent policy agenda. Hence the apparently logical link between problems and solutions is nothing more than a fabrication, the result of the work of policy-makers merging disparate policy 'problems' with unrelated policy 'solutions'.

Theorising Policy-Making beyond the Nation-State: A Focus on External Factors

However elaborate, analysis of the policy process will not be complete without considering the factors influencing policy beyond the nation-state. In addressing the question of state-/beyond-the-state influences, many commentators gesture towards globalisation as a web of influences shaping the educational agenda around the world. However, such an analytical jump from state-level theorising to beyond-the-state theorising not only creates yet another binary but importantly leaves the question of meso-level governance of policy process unaddressed.

To compensate for the lack of attention to meso-level theorising, Ozga (2005), Ball (2009a), Ball and Exley (2010) and increasingly many others turn to *policy network* theory, which proves its usefulness for the analysis of educational policy-making. As Ozga explains, policy networks are clusters of policy actors, agencies, institutions and organisations whose work is aimed at generating and implementing policies via transnational agreements, policy advisory, philanthropy and conditionality (Ozga, 2005). Ball views the usefulness of the policy network approach in its responsiveness to the ideas of multi-level governance and, more broadly, as a way of explaining the emergence of the new modalities of state power, which he captures in the phrase 'The governance turn!' (Ball, 2009b). Ball explains that the move to polycentric governance, whereby policy is produced through multiple agencies and multiple sites of discourse generation, changes the nature of the state which now governs through loosely defined networks of actors organised around an issue or policy objective (Ball, 2009a, 2009b; Ball & Exley, 2010).

The next section considers the relationship between globalisation and education and pays particular attention to various mechanisms through which globalisation reaches different levels and sites of policy.

Globalisation and education: the focus on mechanisms

Monkman and Baird's (2002, p. 498) critical overview of existing globalisation and education studies provides a good starting point for analysis of how globalisation curtails the powers of the nation state over the definition of educational priorities. As Monkman and Baird (2002) observe, the first major weakness of the existing literature is that they do not draw clear analytical distinctions between the phenomenon studied and the locality such a phenomenon manifests itself in. Furthermore, globalisation is often conceived in these studies as an independent force, while it is more constructive to focus on the issues of interconnectedness and hybridisation between the local and the global or local and national involvement in the global. Lastly, Monkman and Baird (2002, p. 498) observe a tendency to conflate other contemporary trends with globalisation, which is yet another serious pitfall in the globalisation and education literature.

Among the studies that withstand the above criticisms is Dale's analysis of the *mechanisms* through which globalisation affects national policies (Dale, 1999). For the purposes of analysis, Dale adopts the term 'globalisation effect' instead of 'globalisation' to cover both globalisation pressures and the state's mediated responses (1999, pp. 5–15).

The five mechanisms of globalisation effects in Dale's thesis are:

1) *harmonisation* – which is an intention of the Maastricht Treaty,

2) *dissemination* – an example of which is an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) activity,

3) *standardisation* – as in the UN Declaration on Human Rights,

4) *installing interdependence* – as in Green Curriculum materials*,* and

5) *imposition* – which is a mechanism through which World Bank educational loans work.

To explain the effects and manifestations of different mechanisms on education Dale offers ten characteristics, the five most representative of which are presented in the below (Table 2).

Table 2. The Typology of Globalisation Effects on National Policies. Adapted from (Dale, 1999, p. 6).

Characteristics of Effects	Mechanisms of Globalisation Effects				
	Harmonisation	Dissemination	Standardisation	Installing Interdependence	Imposition
Nature of relationship	Formally Voluntary	Formally Voluntary	Formally Voluntary	Voluntary	Compulsory
Process	Collective Agreement	Persuasion/ Agenda-Setting	Condition of Membership	Persuasion	Leverage
Parties Involved	Multi-National	Inter-National	Multi-national	Global – Bottom Up	Multi-national
Source of Initiation	Collectively by Members	Supra-National Body	International Community	NGOs (Global Civil Society)	Supra-National Body
Dimension of Power	Conscious Decision	Agenda Setting	Rules of Game	Agenda Setting	All Three Dimensions

In considering other channels through which globalisation effects reach local levels, Alexiadou and Jones' discussion of *travelling policies* (2001) and Seddon's concept of *local spaces* (Seddon, 2005, p. 2) deserves our attention. The concept of *travelling policies* is proposed by Alexiadou and Jones to refer to 'pan-European' policy agendas, implementation of which at the national level results in greater alignment between educational systems (2005, p. 2). *Local spaces*, a term proposed by Seddon, presents a useful addition to Alexiadou and Jones' account, by emphasising the importance of local space and local agency in mediating global pressures. As Seddon views it, *travelling policies* enter local spaces which have their own dynamics, logic and forms of organisation, which until recently

have not been exposed to international influences of such scope and intensity (Seddon, 2005, p. 2). Understanding the role of local elites as mediators of global pressure is especially important here. These local actors often connect global discourses with the needs arising from local circumstances, thus constructing travelling policies as the solution to local problems.

Globalisation and Education: Typology of reforms in the Western and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries

To further our understanding of globalisation effects on national educational systems I now draw on Carnoy's (1999, p. 37), West and Crighton's (1999, p. 271) and Crighton's (2001, p. 3) studies that discuss the typologies of reforms launched in response to globalisation in Western and CIS countries. Carnoy distinguishes between three categories of reform implemented in Western countries. These are competitiveness-driven, finance-driven and equity-driven reforms. *Competitiveness-driven reforms*, he explains, are aimed at increasing economic productivity by improving the quality of labour and the quality and efficiency of education system as a whole. Among these reforms are decentralisation, standardisation, reforms of the system of management, governance and in-service training. *Finance-driven reforms* are initiated in response to the cuts in public-sector budgets and the resources available for financing education and training. Examples of these include shifting public funding from central to local budgets, marketisation, privatisation and various forms of public/private partnerships in education. *Equity-driven reforms*, as the name implies, are aimed at increasing the equality of educational opportunity. Examples of these include education for all, distance learning and various other initiatives aimed at the disadvantaged. Carnoy concludes his account by emphasising that globalisation tends to *push governments away from equity-driven reforms*, thus creating greater social and class inequalities in the delivery of educational services (Carnoy, 1999, p. 37).

Tracing globalisation effects on education systems in CIS countries, West and Crighton (1999, p. 271) observe two major reform initiatives: (1) towards the definition of *national standards* and (2) towards *competence-based* (as distinct from knowledge-based) *assessment*. Ovcharuk and Lokshyna (2004) expand this list to include the sphere that in their opinion has undergone major transformations, that is, *curriculum reform*. Initiated in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, curriculum reform entailed such changes in the content of education as depoliticising the school curriculum, reconceptualising the national history narrative, prioritising the national language of instruction, enhancing communicative versus grammar-translation approaches to learning foreign languages, and introducing a greater variety of social science subjects in school curriculum. For example, across CIS countries new disciplines introduced in the school curricula were Civic Education, Environmental Studies, Information Science, Health, Economics, Philosophy and Psychology. Some schools introduced mandatory training in foreign languages, while others experimented with curriculum choice by introducing English-speaking Countries Studies, Logic, Chess or Ballroom Dancing.

Although useful in examining the initial reforms in the CIS countries, West and Crighton's typology (1999, p. 271) does not account for the changes taking place in the second post-independence decade. Neither does it allow space for considering societal or practitioner level reactions to policy. In this regard Crighton's (2001) typology (see Table 3) has two significant advantages. First, it adopts a chronological rather than content-based approach to categorising policies. Second, it presents criticisms alongside description of the reform objectives.

Table 3. Stages of Educational Reform in the CIS Countries. Adapted from Crighton (2001).

Stage	Objectives/Characteristics	Criticisms
First	Re-establishing educational traditions and structures that existed before the communist era; initiating partial devolution of financial responsibilities to local government	Reforms are characterised by "the initial euphoria at newfound freedoms", to be followed by 'great depression', as a result of hyperinflation and immense cuts of public sector funding.
Second	Gaining national leadership of educational reform and achieving coherence among multiple initiatives; the involvement of external advice tends to be greatest during this stage;	The dominant focus on the top-down implementation of projects rather than on practical changes at the classroom and school levels
Third	Attuning the reforms of the previous stages with the country's particular circumstances and also with influential externally driven discourses.	At the policy level global discourses of 'quality' and 'standards' are articulated; at the level of schools there is often 'reform fatigue' resulting from a work overload and chronic lack of resources.

Instead of conclusions: 'Virtual' policies and 'partisan' responses, or what Western policy sociology does not capture

However useful, the task of looking for definitional precision of 'policy' and the grasp of the key debates on the state and beyond the state processes shaping education policy leave anyone working in non-Western contexts rather discontent. Through our experience and engagements with the 'logic' and assemblages of power - called states - in non-liberal contexts, we feel strongly that the above discussion does not fully capture the developments on the ground. What is missing from the above theorisations is the understanding of the nature of the non-liberal states and societal responses to policy initiated by states and beyond the state actors. What can be concluded from initial observations of illiberal contexts is the highly rhetorical nature of policies, which in the literature are sometimes captured by the terms 'virtual' or 'faking' policies (cf. Wilson 2005).

In the education sphere in particular one can observe multiple examples of what can be called 'partisan' responses of professional communities to policies. These are the situations when in official settings (e.g. teaching councils, reports, self-evaluations, etc.) practitioners act 'as if' they are engaging with the official rhetoric yet in the closed environment of their own classrooms manage to preserve their educational routines intact. This is because they strongly believe that enacting a new policy, for example inquiry-based student-centred learning, does not align with their professional beliefs of 'what works' better in preparing students for national exams or subject Olympiads, which are important markers of teacher professionalism in the CIS countries, for example. This is one example which demonstrates that the divide between words and deeds, rhetoric and reality, between what is said and done in non-Western educational settings is much greater than in Western educational contexts.

In order to understand the persistence of 'virtual' policies and 'partisan' responses to policies in illiberal contexts it is important to pinpoint the very core of practices whereby the

divergence between the liberal and illiberal contexts is the most striking. These practices surround the execution of power in two respective contexts. A brief overview of how power is exercised in liberal and illiberal contexts and implications for policy analysis concludes this discussion.

To account for the exercise of power in illiberal contexts Foucault employs the term 'a relationship of violence' as distinct from 'power relation'. Power relation, Foucault explains, acts upon the 'field of possibilities' of *actions*, "it incites, it induces, it seduces; it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less … it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects" (Foucault, 2002b, p. 341). Whereas 'violence', according to Foucault, acts directly "upon a *body* or upon *things*; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities" [my emphasis] (Foucault, 2002b, p. 340).

A similar image of violent, alien and despotic forms of power deployed by the official government in Russia is present in the accounts of many Sovietologists who sought to capture this, distinct from the West, arrangement of governmental practices (Tucker, 1972; White, 1979). Tucker, for example, suggests that the relations between the autocratic state and the people in Tsarist and Soviet Russia were often construed as being between "the conqueror and the conquered" (Tucker, 1972, p. 70). To support this point, Tucker quotes Herzen's discussion of 'two Russias', the state and the people, which came into hostile opposition with each other from the beginning of the eighteenth century:

> *On the one hand, there was governmental, imperial, aristocratic Russia, rich in money, armed not only with bayonets but with all the bureaucratic and police techniques taken from Germany. On the other hand, there was the Russia of the dark people, poor, agricultural, communal, democratic, helpless, taken by surprise, conquered as it were, without battle* (Herzen 1907, p. 181 Tucker, 1972, p. 72).

Tucker concludes, again drawing on Herzen, that official power in Russia came to be seen, in the eyes of a majority of the people, as 'a kind of occupying force' in their native land. In the analysis of political culture in the Soviet times, White reaches a similar conclusion, noting that Russia's vast territory might be one of the predisposing reasons for such patterns of governmental arrangements. However, he continues, "[w]hatever the explanation …the government of Russia has been regarded for some time, and not without justification, as a *despotism* more Asiatic than European in character" [my emphasis] (White, 1979, p. 22).

In order to understand the modes of objectification established under conditions of 'despotic unfreedom' in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, it is useful to turn to the original and thought-provoking studies by Kharkhordin *The Soviet Individual: Genealogy of a dissimulating animal* (1995) and *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: The Study of Practices* (1999). Relevant to the discussion is one of Kharkhodin's observations which suggests that Communist Party rituals of doing penance in the pubic gaze were established by the Soviet regime as the main method of governing and socialisation (Kharkhordin, 1999, p. 419). Having their antecedents in the Orthodox Christian practices of admonition and excommunication, the age-old tradition of 'penitential revelation of the self in the public gaze' permeated all spheres of Soviet life: from Party and factory meetings to classroom and University environments. Soviet individuals responded to this forced obligation to submit individual morality to the judgement of the relevant community by developing a *double posture* in which 'a visible obedient participant in Party rituals and an invisible truth-teller and gain-seeker' shared the same body (Kharkhordin, 1995, p. 216).

Various commentators have attempted to capture the double nature of Soviet individualism in a single concept. For example, Clark uses the term 'modal schizophrenia' to account for the condition of oscillation between 'what is' and 'what ought to be' ascribed to the literature of

Socialist Realism and to the life of Soviet individual in general (Clark, 1986, p. 37). Klugman introduces the term 'inner immigration' to define a psychological response of withdrawal into the satisfactions of private life and the avoidance of public duties (Klugman, 1986, p. 72). However, the most successful term to account for both the coercive nature of the Soviet regime and the psychological responses that the populace developed under such conditions is the concept of *dissimulation*, suggested by Jowitt (Jowitt, 1992, p. 69; see also Tismaneanu, Howard, Sil, & Jowitt, 2006). Jowitt explains that in Leninist regimes, where the threat of violence for noncompliance is high, public compliance will occur without private acceptance. That is, regime expectations will not be internalised but rather simulated by the individual (cf. Wilson's 2005 terms 'imitation' or 'faking democracy').

In advancing the concept of dissimulation, Jowitt (1992, p. 80) manages to pinpoint the central social practice familiar to every Soviet citizen: saying something while believing the opposite to be true, "bringing up children by telling them that a schism exists between what is and what ought to be, a schism not to be mentioned in public statements that should describe the world as if the ideal were real" (Kharkhordin, 1995, p. 210). Going back to the example provided in the beginning of the section, one can conclude that two decades after the fall of Communism the practices of 'dissimulation' continue to shape societal responses to policies in non-Western contexts. This practice is yet to be accounted for in the works of policy sociology.

What are we left with upon engaging with the debates in policy sociology and beyond? First is caution in applying Western theories to non-Western contexts as they do not fully capture the developments on the ground and, in particular, practitioner responses to policies in non-Western contexts. Second is the need to devise methodologies which can capture dissimulation practices empirically as the key to understanding educational developments in non-Western contexts.

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