Discourse Formation in Comparative Education
edited by
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**Preface**

*Discourse Formation* is a term originating from the history and sociology of the sciences and from findings generated by these disciplines. *Discourse formation* thus refers to insights into the constructedness of academic knowledge, as well as to models meant to conceptualize such insights. More specifically, this term emphasizes the fact that institutionalized fields of academic study, in general, and the social sciences including comparative education, in particular, are a historical and intellectual enterprise. These fields, in varying forms and to varying degrees, bear the imprint of specific institutional settings, changing intellectual trends, and diverse socio-political conditions. It is social actors from different arenas—politicians as well as academics, ministry officials as well as leading intellectuals, and publicists as well as spokesmen of particular professions—who, through dialogue and lobbying, contribute to either bringing to the fore or to eclipsing particular paradigms, intellectual currents, or theoretically defined research programs.

Thus, including a concept like *discourse formation* in the title of a volume dedicated to re-considering the intellectual shaping of and fruitful research agendas for comparative education, means adopting a distinctive intellectual vantage point. This vantage point allows theorists in the field to relativize orthodox methodologies and to historicize taken-for-granted concepts and models. It is a vantage point, furthermore, which brings attention to the interplay of theories and methods, and therefore invites analyses, not only of the theory shifts reiteratively occurring in the field, but also of the methodological consequences entailed by

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TRANSFERRING EDUCATION, DISPLACING REFORMS

Gita Steiner-Khamsi

Since its inception as an academic field, comparative education has been enamored with research on educational transfer. Whether we consider a very practical question "What can we learn and borrow from other educational systems?" or move on to a topic of great academic concern such as "Are national educational systems increasingly becoming similar as a result of borrowing?" - the range of questions dealing with educational transfer appears genuinely comparative.

Most introductory texts treat educational transfer as a key research area of comparative education.¹ There is no doubt that the study of trans-

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Transfer has helped to legitimize and sustain our field. It is important to recall, however, that in addition to a long history of research on educational transfer, we also look back on a strong tradition of skepticism. Numerous warnings have been articulated about borrowing, whether wholesale, selective, or eclectic. To some extent, borrowing implies isolating education from its political, economic, and cultural context. Given this particular concern with decontextualization, it is not surprising that most research on educational transfer has focused on what has been borrowed from one context to another.

In this paper I attempt to dig under the surface of educational transfer in order to examine how much of what has been borrowed has, in fact, been implemented. In more ways than one, educators and policy analysts in borrowing countries have been portrayed as passive receivers of educational goods – models, reforms, policies – which they then gratefully implement in their own context. In response to that portrayal, I would like to make the point that their stories of resisting, modifying, and indigenizing imported educational goods have not been sufficiently told. Rather than depicting experts in borrowing countries, mostly developing countries, as recipients of western educational concepts, we should develop an analytical framework that acknowledges the agency of both lending and borrowing countries.

One of the central purposes of this article is to examine the ways in which educational transfer is used to legitimize contested reforms and to consider its effects on both lending and borrowing systems. As the title of this paper suggests, I analyze the relation between educational transfer and the displacement of contested school-reforms. It is important to bear in mind the double meaning of "displacement." On one hand, I use the term literally to denote the geographical displacement, or deterritorialization, of school-reforms, where, for economic reasons, pretested models are imported or new educational models are temporarily lent and tested elsewhere. On the other hand, "displacement" refers to political displacement, where policy analysts, for political reasons, transfer educational models from one context to another. Reframing educational transfer in terms of displacement, enables us to interpret lending and borrow-

Comparative Education," in New Approaches to Comparative Education, ed. by Philip G. Altbach & Gail P. Kelly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 153-165.ing as practices that help policy analysts to make a case for contested school-reforms that otherwise would have been rejected. Hence, what lending and borrowing systems gain from educational transfer is of critical importance for our study of the topic.

Over the last decade, research on educational transfer has experienced a renaissance of a special kind. Educational researchers who otherwise would not identify themselves as comparativists have manifested enormous interest in the topic. It has enabled many scholars to understand globalization processes and to substantiate their belief that national educational systems in different parts of the world are converging, that is, are becoming increasingly similar because policy analysts learn from each other. The resurgence of our research topic in the context of globalization forces comparativists who have a long-standing skepticism towards educational transfer to reflect on a new set of questions: Have national educational systems, in fact, become more similar? Or does it only seem that they have become more similar because we have emphasized commonalities over differences, discourse over practice, rhetoric over implementation? Is the convergence of national educational systems just wishful thinking on the part of lending countries who are oblivious to actual developments in borrowing countries?

In an attempt to reappropriate research on educational transfer for comparative education, I will examine in the first section of this paper the debate on convergence that has contributed so visibly to the growth of research on educational transfer. Placing the topic in the larger context of educational convergence will help us recall why the study of educational transfer has been and will remain a topic of great interest.

In the second section, I will proceed to a more detailed review of the assumptions that have guided research on educational borrowing. Depending on the theoretical framework that one uses to interpret educational borrowing, different insights regarding the international convergence of education systems surface. Thus, in some parts of this section, I will offer the same examples, but apply contrasting frameworks of interpretation. If we use a framework that focuses on what has been borrowed, we are channeled to search for commonalities between the lending and borrowing systems. Indeed, if researchers focus on the content of transfer, there is no doubt that they will find a common denominator of
national education reforms that they can then account for with convergence theory. However, if we choose to bring local contexts to the fore, direct our attention to agencies of lending and borrowing, and ask why some idea or discourse has been transferred, we gain a completely different understanding of educational transfer. In the latter framework our attention is focused on the politics of borrowing, on adaptation and implementation processes, and on agencies resisting, inverting, or indigenizing educational imports. As a corollary, this framework sees educational transfer as a way to displace contested educational reforms.

In the third section, I point out to issues that have been rarely studied in comparative education research. First, I propose to extend the notion of transfer by including the transfer of discourses. Rather than confining ourselves to transferred models and practices, we should take seriously the political signals that transferred discourses may convey. Secondly, there is ample evidence that dependent states have been and continue to be used as test-sites for school-reforms that are contested in lending systems. This unexplored territory has the potential to lay bare the circularity of educational transfer. Rather than mapping educational transfer linearly, locating a clear system of origin and a receiver system, we can conceive of educational transfer as a circular movement. Our attention is then directed toward contested educational policies that have been exported, implemented in another context, and then reintroduced. By implication, this new framework also provides a new set of issues and problems that need to be addressed when examining the convergence of educational systems.

THEORIZING CONVERGENCE

Most researchers who believe that national education systems are converging take for granted that we all know what this entails. Only a few actually describe the ways in which national education systems are becoming increasingly similar.

I will use James Guthrie and Lawrence Pierce's description of the "emerging international model" of education to exemplify what is meant by convergence. According to them, national education systems around the world increasingly share the following features: "a nationally estab-

lished curriculum that gives more weight to mathematics, science and foreign languages; a devolution of operational decision-making authority to the school site; a greater use of performance tests for accountability purposes; an emphasis on teacher training and teacher professionalism; and, for higher education programs, an expansion of access and incentives for life-long learning." Guthrie and Pierce's model is only one of many that scholars have developed to account for a general convergence process. However, although the concrete features of an international education model may be assessed differently by various scholars, the idea of convergence remains the same.

While it is undisputed that the emerging global economy, international migration, and technological expansion do "something" to national educational systems in all parts of the world, some of us wonder exactly how current globalization processes affect educational systems, and how educational transfer comes into play.

Choosing from the universe of theoretical explanations as to why national educational systems increasingly share similar features, I will confine my discussion to three approaches: the consensus model, the conflict model, and the culturalist model. The consensus and conflict models, widely discussed in the comparative education literature, tend to argue from opposite ends.

The consensus model assumes that the emerging global economy has created serious challenges that affect all educational systems in similar ways. For instance, higher education systems are now experiencing the social consequences of the nineteen sixties: economic development, political and social mobilization, and the consolidation of independent postcolonial states. All of these global developments are believed to have contributed to a general increase in career aspirations and expectations in all parts of the world. Today's "brain circulation," that is, the international migration of highly qualified individuals, can be interpreted as a visible sign that was triggered more than thirty years ago. This trend,

tionally reforms enter the pool of solutions that are likely to be borrowed. Taking the implications of this model one step further, we now can understand why scholars applying consensus theory tend to regard the international education model not only as the most widespread model, but also as the best and most effective currently available.

The conflict model also recognizes the convergence of national educational systems, but explains it differently. The emergence of one particular international model of education, according to this model, is by no means a voluntary and consensual act of borrowing, but rather a visible sign of neocolonialism and cultural imperialism. Thus, what makes features of an educational system attractive and exportable is due not so much to its quality and effectiveness, but rather to the resources available for spreading it. When we count resources, we should not consider just financial means, but include all the other factors that contribute to the export of educational reforms, such as access to information, expertise, technology, networking, and representation in international organizations.

Applying a world-systems approach, conflict theorists frame educational transfer from economic “core” to “subcores” and “peripheral” countries as a strategy designed to keep countries economically, politically, and educationally dependent. This is done, again, by utilizing educational models developed in advanced industrialized societies (e.g., Headstart program, decentralization and site-based management, and voucher plans) as blueprints for educational reforms in developing countries. From a cultural imperialism perspective, the “emerging international model” has not gradually developed as a result of borrowing, but has been actively propagated by advanced industrialized societies.

There is much to be said for this interpretation. For instance, most of the features of the international model of education, except expansion of access to higher education, are also listed in the World Bank's Education Sector Report. For conflict theorists, convergence is real, but “globalization” is a misnomer for what is, in reality, Americanization or westernization of the rest of the world.


In contrast to the conflict and consensus models, the culturalist model does not take the international convergence of educational systems at face value. What appears as transfer of educational models is seen as a transfer of academic and professional discourses on education. Thus, educational transfer is not a sign that educational systems are converging, but rather that experts from different parts of the world are interacting. What happens on site is a different issue altogether. This perspective recognizes the impact of cultural imperialism on educational systems. However, how local forces respond to these global challenges is not as predictable as convergence theorists have suggested. Teasing out the intersection between the global and the local has, of course, been a project of cultural anthropologists and, more recently, cultural sociologists. In the last few years, numerous works have appeared that convincingly counter the assumption that globalization necessarily leads to a global culture. What happens when global developments encounter local culture has been well documented by such scholars as Homi Bhabha, who examines the emergence of "hybrid cultures," and Arjun Appadurai, who highlights "third cultures" and "indigenization processes." It is important to remember that there are no global developments that affect local cultures in identical ways. Appadurai points to the disjunction between different transnational flows, which he identifies as the flow of people, the flow of technology, the flow of financial information, the flow of media images and information, and the flow of ideologies and world views. Moreover, depending on the region, there are different cores, subcores, and peripheries that affect local cultures in multiple ways.

This third perspective also challenges assumptions that equate a nation-state with a culture, or national educational systems with nationally uniform educational values. Instead, it recognizes the plurality of cultures within a nation-state and highlights differences in how people construct shared meanings around issues of education. It acknowledges the persistence of diverse educational interests and concerns in societies that are divided by class, race, ethnicity, and gender. As a consequence of these different perspectives, educational reforms are always contested, that is, supported by some and opposed by others. How educational transfer plays into the ongoing contest over what should constitute "education," is indeed an important yet understudied question. Posing this question might free up our comparative minds for a new set of questions that helps us examine the relationship between international developments and domestic educational reforms.

For comparative education research, this strand of research seems extremely challenging, since an international model of education assumes, to some extent, globally shared educational values and concepts. Making a case for the third perspectives, I suggest bringing back culture into the research on educational transfer, and drawing our attention to what is happening locally once a transfer has occurred.

**EDUCATIONAL TRANSFER REVISITED**

In the previous section, I have explained why the larger academic and professional communities have manifested a growing interest in research on educational transfer. Bearing in mind the larger issue of educational convergence, I can now illuminate how the topic has been dealt with in the comparative education research community.

It seems that comparative education research has either been saturated or become disillusioned with research on transfer or educational borrowing. When Hubert O. Quist and I reviewed five journals in comparative and international education, we were surprised to find only one special issue and eight articles published in the period 1986 to 1996 that explicitly deal with transfer, adaptation, or borrowing. The journals examined were Comparative Education Review, Comparative Education, Compare, Prospects, and International Journal of Educational Develop-

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9. I would like to thank Hubert O. Quist, Ph.D. candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, for helping me review the journals and compile the articles. This research project was funded by a summer research grant from Teachers College, Columbia University.
ment. Some journals have demonstrated a continuous commitment to publishing research on this topic. 10

Although the volume of research has been relatively small, the field seems to have moved in promising new directions. The research question on which the special issue of Comparative Education was based reads as follows: "Why is it that particular countries at particular times become interested in the educational systems of particular other countries?" Titles of some of the articles also reflect the new kind of research questions: "Neither a Borrower nor a Lender Be: The Problems of Cross-National Attraction in Education," "The Politics of Education Policy Borrowing," and "Educational Transfer of Sorts: The American Credit System with Chinese Characteristics." These titles reflect a new focus on topics such as the politics of borrowing, adaptation and implementation processes, and lending systems. Thus, while traditional research was mainly interested in describing what has been selectively borrowed from one system to another and exploring the impact of imported educational reforms on the borrowing countries, more recent research addresses a different kind of research questions: Why did transfer occur? How was the transfer implemented? Who were the agents of transfer?

These new ways of approaching educational transfer have informed a more critical reflection on the key question "what can we learn from other educational systems?" Some would argue that we should label this question academically unsound and ban it from further scholarly analysis altogether. There is sufficient evidence to make the point that there is, in fact, little to learn from other systems. All we would need to do is highlight the context- and culture-boundness of each system 11. However, since this key question continues to attract many students and practitioners to the field, it would not do to seal off this research area. In addition, it seems that no other topic depends as much on the comparative advantage as the study of educational transfer. For practical and intellectual reasons, I therefore suggest a different strategy. I propose turning the normative, practice-oriented question "what can be learned?" into the descriptive, research-oriented question "what has been learned?" Similarly, I suggest that we ask "what has been transferred?" rather than "what can be transferred?" From a research perspective, I can now, in retrospect, identify assumptions on which more practice-oriented transfer research had been based. What deserves our attention are those assumptions that have directed research on educational transfer into a blind alley.

For the purpose of further differentiation, I refer to these three assumptions of practice-oriented transfer research as system learning, system transfer, and system equity.


11. We have a long-standing tradition in comparative education to acknowledge the context- and culture-boundness of educational systems. Sir Michael Sadler's early warning in 1900 that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the schools, and govern and interpret the things inside the schools" (see Bereday 1964) illustrated the context- and culture-boundness of each national educational system. Isaac L. Kandel, faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University and former student of Sadler, also sought to understand the "national spirit" of each educational system, and, thus, was reluctant to selectively borrow from other systems. For this very reason, Kandel favored for a long time one-country studies over cross-national studies applying the method of implicit comparison and historiography. See George Z.F. Bereday, "Sir Michael Sadler's "Study of Foreign Systems of Education"," reprint of the notes of an address given at the Guildford Educational Conference, on Saturday, October 20, 1900, by M.E. Sadler, Christ Church, Oxford," in Comparative Education Review February (1964); Erwin Pollack, "Isaac Leon Kandel (1881-1965)," in Prospects 3/4 (1993), pp. 775-787; see also note 46.

12. For instance, the introductory class in international education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is titled "Schooling, Culture, and National Development: What Can Educators Learn from Other Systems?"
System Learning

It is striking how policy-oriented research depicts educational transfer as a case of system learning, in which administrators of one system, usually government officials, are charged with seeking out more "modern," efficient, or effective educational reforms already in place in other educational systems. Embedded in this naïve assertion is a conception of progress that ranks nation-states with regard to desired educational outcomes. Part of this endeavor has been to formulate, in retrospect, standards of educational outcome for different periods of history. According to this view, in the mid-nineteenth century, government officials evaluated educational systems, both their own and those of other newly formed nation-states, with regard to their capacity to produce informed citizens. In the mid-twentieth century during the Sputnik era, the question became which educational system is more likely to advance the sciences. And in today's global economy, policy analysts tend to measure educational outcomes in terms of economic and technological competitiveness. Correspondingly, educational transfer in the nineteenth century was likely to evolve around civic literacy, in the nineteen sixties around scientific literacy, and in the nineteen nineties around economically productive literacy.

I will confine myself to presenting three episodes, one for each of the historical periods mentioned above, that are frequently used in the comparative education literature as examples of system learning. (1) In 1844, Horace Mann, secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education, used his Seventh Annual Report to praise educational practices he had encountered in Prussia that were concerned with pedagogy, student assessment, and keeping discipline without resorting to corporal punishment. His report, at the time correctly interpreted as an attempt to import European methods into the Massachusetts educational system, stirred up an acrimonious debate about the use of corporal punishment in Boston schools. In the comparative education literature, Mann stands out as someone who "was prepared to report on whatever happened to catch his eye," and as the prototype of the nineteenth-century educator who traveled in search of ideas to be borrowed. (2) In 1959, Kolmogorov, a Russian mathematician, established the first Russian boarding school for mathematically gifted students. His idea of establishing a boarding school that is affiliated with the mathematics faculty of a university was inspired by similar institutions in Hungary, which he had visited a few years earlier. (3) In 1989, John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe visited England to study the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act. Based on the perceived commonalities between educational reforms in the U.S. and in England and Wales, they invited American readers to learn from British experiences: "Britain ... has been able to move further and faster toward a radical overhaul of its educational system; and is far more likely to succeed. We can only hope it does, and that America can someday follow in Britain's footsteps."

These three episodes tell us only half of the story. To complete the story, we need to recognize the politics of borrowing. There is a great deal to learn from recent analyses that have traced the process of transferring school reforms between the United Kingdom and the United States. David Halpin and Barry Troyna, for instance, reflecting on reasons for this busy transnational flow of discourses and practices, write: "It rarely has much to do with the success, however defined, of the institutional realization of particular policies in their countries of origin; rather, it has much more to do with legitimizing other related policies." They also point to an interesting phenomenon: policy analysts borrow, more often than not, educational policies from other educational systems that, in the original context, were seen as failures, as ineffective, or at least as highly contested. Hence, there must be other factors that explain the import of educational policies from abroad. Halpin and Troyna's account provides a compelling alternative to the more common explanation, which states that British and American policy analysts have developed...


opened school reform along similar lines because both systems face similar problems, namely a decline of international competitiveness. Instead, cross-national studies examining the politics of borrowing acknowledge the persistence of a multitude of educational policy solutions to economic, political, and social problems.

Given that the introduction of educational reforms is always contested, we can see the usefulness of educational policy transfer in a new light. This applies especially to educational reforms that target fundamental rather than incremental change. There is little doubt that the decentralization movement constitutes a fundamental reform of national educational systems. It affects every level of reform, administration, governance, finance, and contents of education, and it redefines quality and effectiveness in major ways. However, as debates in the United States and in the United Kingdom rage over the impact of shifting decision-making authority, introducing national standards (Goals 2000 in the U.S.; national curriculum in England and Wales), emphasizing basic skills, implementing school choice, or, for that matter, the impact of any other component of the decentralization reform package on the education of minority students, it becomes clear that there is by no means a consensus as to what constitutes good education for all. Controversies over fundamental school reforms press us to consider policy borrowing in the larger context of organizational decision making. David Robertson and Jerold Waltman, for instance, analyze situations that lead to policy borrowing. The greater the conflict over the goals of educational innovation, and the greater the uncertainty about the effectiveness of current solutions, the more likely is the occurrence of policy borrowing.


Coming back to the much cited examples of Horace Mann and Kolmogorov, I suggest reframing these classic cases of transnational educational borrowing in terms of the politics of borrowing. Horace Mann's selective borrowing of educational policies from European educational systems helped him to carry through his republican vision of common schools that were state controlled and equipped with professional teachers. His plan to professionalize teaching, which according to Lawrence Cremin can be traced to earlier attempts made by the French philosopher and later Minister of Education Victor Cousin, emphasized a careful selection of educators, well-designed training, and increased status and authority for the teaching profession.20

Kolmogorov's import of the Hungarian model of boarding schools for mathematically gifted students also needs to be scrutinized with regard to its political agenda. At the time, Russian students had to interrupt academic instruction to obtain practical work experience in factories or on farms. If Kolmogorov had proposed a general educational reform that promoted uninterrupted academic instruction, it would have been regarded as elitist and "bourgeois." This was not the case with mathematics and science education. At that time, any reform that would effectively widen the gap between American standards of mathematics education and Soviet standards was considered a patriotic move. As Nikolai Nikandrov points out, Allen Tracy's book What Ivan Knows That Johnnie Doesn't: A Comparison of Soviet and American School Programs was much discussed in the Soviet educational press of the nineteen sixties.22 Published during the Sputnik era, this book celebrated the quality of those Soviet science programs (physics and mathematics), in which young Americans lagged behind. This said, we need to remember that no other school subject was able to question established practices as profoundly as mathematics and science. The Hungarian model, at that time internationally acclaimed for its high standards in mathematics and sci-


21. For a compilation of schools for mathematically gifted students, see Vogeli 1997.

ence, was a transferable model that could convince Russian education authorities to exempt boarding schools for mathematically gifted children from the principles of Soviet polytechnical education.

Rather than understanding educational policy borrowing as a corollary of the convergence of national economies, in which policy analysts borrow a potential solution to a shared problem, drawing our attention to the politics of borrowing helps us to understand conflicting policy options. Borrowing does not occur in a policy vacuum. I am making the point here that we should dismiss educational transfer as a form of system learning, and instead examine how educational borrowing serves as a powerful means to displace contested educational reforms. It helps accelerate the evaluation of policy options and prevents arduous bargaining processes among stakeholders. In other words, reference to successful national educational reforms of other countries gives policy analysts leverage in pushing through a particular policy option.

System Transfer

This second assumption of educational transfer, namely system transfer, suggesting that educational reforms can be transferred as is, needs to be scrutinized in more detail. Again, if we turn our attention to “What has been borrowed?” rather than “What do we borrow?” we see that borrowing is not copying. It is often presented as a fact that policy analysts save design and implementation costs by adopting educational models that have already been tested elsewhere. This is questionable. The costs of educational borrowing, that is, the costs of implementing an existing educational model in a new context, have been grossly understudied. William Richardson, for instance, describes the high costs for the British government in borrowing the American education-business "compact" model. In order to make the compact model effective in the British economic environment, British experts had to spend an enormous amount on implementation and re-adaptation. 23


Holding on to our research strategy, that is, suspending the question whether transfer is feasible and instead examining the process, we can clearly see that every transfer produces a recontextualization process. From this perspective, asking how a borrowed policy has been locally recontextualized, modified, or indigenized is more insightful than merely stating that a policy has been selectively borrowed, for the indigenization process tells us something about the culture of the borrowing system.

An interesting case study of indigenization is presented by Michael Agelasto. He depicts, from a historical perspective, how Chinese universities moved back and forth between the Soviet and American systems. 24 The American credit system was first introduced in 1917 by Beijing University, but then dropped in the nineteen fifties as China followed the Soviet academic year system, under which students were organized in academic cohorts that started their program at the same time, took the same set of courses, and completed their studies in a set time. In 1978, a few Chinese universities started to reintroduce the American credit system because it encouraged flexibility, independence, and self-study. However, faculty and students at Chinese universities did not absorb the American credit system unquestioningly. Agelasto examines how Shenzhen University gradually indigenized the imported American credit system in ways that complied with earlier structures of course organization.

It is important to bear in mind that developments at Shenzhen University are by no means representative of trends in the rest of the People's Republic. Located in the Special Economic Zone adjacent to Hong Kong, it is unusually well-resourced and open to western influences. Nevertheless, the Shenzhen case study still constitutes a valid example for illustrating an indigenization process.

When the university adopted the American credit system in 1983, the faculty feared that it would result in too much individual choice for students on the one hand and too little say by professors on the other and would ultimately lead to a laissez-faire style that was detrimental to quality education. In fact, the credit system introduced limited choice for

the students, allowing them to select approximately one-fifth of the courses on their own. More appealing to the students was the option to skip courses if they scored over 70 on an exemption examination. They could also get credit for a course just by passing the final exams. As a result, students enrolled for concurrent classes, studied on their own, and passed the final course exams. Despite these options, the abuses of the credit system were minimal: in 1988, three out of fifty students took over 70 hours of classes each week, two graduated early, and one obtained a double degree.

Nevertheless, faculty and administration felt that the situation was getting out of hand. Between 1983 and 1993, they made several incremental changes to the credit system that blurred the underlying philosophy in fundamental ways. In a first revision, course options were simplified and reduced so that students were presented with a very restricted choice among required courses, though they still had the option to complete their studies at their own pace. In a second major revision, credits had to be taken within each program and department and any course taken outside the student's department needed the instructor's approval. A further series of incremental changes led to a virtual dismissal of the initial credit system.

According to Agelasto, in 1993, only ten years after the introduction of the American credit system, the previous Soviet-influenced academic year system was re instituted. The indigenization or local adaptation process of the borrowed American credit system led to a distinct culture-bound Chinese credit system. Compared to the American system, the Chinese system today includes less choice of classes, more class attendance, stricter control, and ability-based choice, that is, only the good students are granted a choice of classes.

At stake here is the question of how selectively borrowed policies become culturally translated into the new context. There is a wealth of information about how Dewey's work was adopted and culturally translated in different parts of the world.25 Starting in the nineteen twenties,

Dewey's work influenced generations of educators, visionaries, and intellectuals abroad. To some extent Dewey's frequent travels to other countries contributed to the international dissemination of his ideas. More effective, however, was the transfer by international students who returned home after studying in the United States. Generations of international students borrowed progressive education concepts and adapted them to the local context. In either case, his own direct lending or the repatriate's borrowing, Dewey had no control over the implementation, cultural translation, adaptation, and indigenization process of his ideas. In China, for instance, Teachers College student Tao Xingzhi turned, according to Su Zhixin, a "half somersault" of Dewey's theories in order to transplant the American theory in ways that fit local conditions. Tao founded a teacher education school, the Morning Village Normal School, in Nanjing. The Normal School soon became the one place in China where Dewey's ideas were put into practice after having undergone a Chinese transformation. According to Su Zhixin, "Tao transformed Dewey's "school as society" into his "society as school," Dewey's "education as life" into his "life as education," and Dewey's "learning by doing" into his principle of the "unity of teaching, learning, and reflective action."26 As Dewey traveled to Mexico, Chile, Russia, South Africa and other places, he became a symbol of educational reform in general. It became common practice to attribute any educational reform, especially one that involved "working with the hands" or community education to Dewey's influence.

In each cultural setting Dewey was interpreted differently. Wherever his ideas touched fertile ground, they were soon enmeshed with local culture. Indian educators, for instance, linked Dewey's philosophy with that of Gandhi, colonial education administrators in Africa referred to him when introducing adapted education models, and Mexican government officials based their rural education reform on Dewey's philosophy. This is not to imply that Dewey's conception of education was so vague as to allow multiple interpretations. Rather the analysis presented here


suggests that every successful implementation of borrowed ideas and practices involves indigenization and cultural adaptation.

**System Equity**

The third assumption, system equity, has preoccupied much of the comparative education research literature since the mid-nineteen seventies. Given the complexity of educational export and import, some scholars have chosen to use more specific terms when writing about educational transfer. Instead of using the widespread term borrowing as a generic term including any direction of educational transfer, they prefer to distinguish between borrowing, lending, and imposition. David Phillips, for instance, points out the oddness of the term borrowing, which is haunted by the image of system equity: "Borrowing" implies a temporary loan of something, the understanding being that it will be returned at a future stage." And closing his remark, he states that: "Some would argue that the return of "borrowed" policies might be a just reward for "lender" systems."27 Phillips' critical remark helps us to understand what lending systems gain from educational export and transfer.

Colonial education and technical assistance are two educational transfer practices which until the nineteen seventies were naïvely subsumed under borrowing. Colonial and neocolonial education administrators certainly did not gloss over system inequality. On the contrary, it was seen as "the white man's burden" to educate the "natives." Nevertheless, until the nineteen seventies, policy imposition and conditional lending on the part of core countries came across as voluntary cultural borrowing by dependent states.

The most outspoken critic against framing colonial education and technical assistance as "cultural borrowing" was Brian Holmes.28 He devotes the first chapter of his book *Comparative Education: Some Considerations of Method* to cultural borrowing, which he labels "misconceived comparative education." An ardent opponent of selective borrow-


...rowing, he rightfully questions "whether selective cultural borrowing is theoretically justified and practically feasible." His attack is directed towards technical assistance experts who impose their reform packages on dependent states. He finds that, regardless of circumstances, British and American experts almost always favored the introduction of a decentralized system of educational administrators, whereas Soviet and German Democratic Republic experts always recommended the introduction of polytechnical education in countries they were advising.

It is difficult to imagine what early comparativists in Europe and North America thought when they assumed that the rest of the world would readily embrace the imposition of western educational policies. One of the main effects of downplaying the dependency of borrowing systems is the consistent disregard of local resistance against transferred educational policies.

A good case in point is "adapted education," which since the nineteen twenties has been reinterpreted more than once in response to changing paradigms in comparative education research. In the first half of this century, adapted education was part of a wider belief that education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations, and traditions of various groups. It has been a recurrent theme of research on educational transfer because it constitutes a rare case in which the international transfer of a concept can be clearly mapped. The concept of adapted education was first developed around 1890 as part of the Hampton-Tuskegee model for the education of African Americans in the U.S. South, then transferred to the African continent in 1900, subsequently used in the nineteen thirties for the education of indigenous peoples of the Pacific, and in its final stage in the nineteen fifties diffused wherever the British colonial administration felt pressured to deal with the education of "backward" and "retarded" people, including Cyprus.29

Transferred along was a concept of racially segregated schooling that would not tread on the delicate ground of white supremacy in colonial settings, either in the U.S. South or the British Empire. Central to General Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Booker T. Washington's philosophy of education was that the black man's education should reflect the fact that he was willing to start at the bottom and prove himself capable of attaining higher goals. Hence, the education of black men, colonized men, or indigenous men needed to be "adapted" to their limited intellectual capacities, their life of servitude, and the limited "Negro world" in a rural environment.\textsuperscript{30} Adapted education, exemplified in the "activity curriculum" of the Hampton Institute and the Tuskegee Institute, aimed at ideals of Godliness, cleanliness, and industrial education. Among the activities taught at the two American institutes were blacksmithing, basketry, carriage trimming, and bricklaying, as well as homemaking arts for the girls. It is important to note the speed of diffusion with which adapted education was spread around the globe. Within only two decades, a philosophy of education developed in the segregated U.S. South promoting agricultural and manual skills for blacks spread to every corner of the British colonial Empire. In order to understand this uncanny alliance between a racialized American education concept and a British colonial education policy, we need to look at the historical context out of which adapted education emerged.

This remarkable transfer can only be comprehended if we recognize the vast financial and intellectual resources that were poured into the dissemination of adapted education. In 1909, Caroline Phelps Stokes left approximately one million dollars for the education of needy whites, American Indians, and "Negroes in Africa and the United States."\textsuperscript{31} Thomas Jesse Jones, a Welsh immigrant who graduated from Columbia of Negro Education 48 (1972), 2, pp. 99-112; Edward H. Berman, "American Influence on African Education: The Role of the Phelps-Stokes Fund's Education Commissions," in Comparative Education Review 15 (1972), 2, pp. 132-145; Berman suggests that the first export of the Hampton-Tuskegee model occurred in 1908, when Booker T. Washington sent three graduates and one faculty member to Togo to work for a private German company in an attempt to increase agricultural productivity by using Tuskegee's methods.


University in New York, was appointed educational director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund. Under Jones's directorship, the Phelps-Stokes Fund convened and financed two commissions in 1920/21 and 1924 to evaluate the colonial educational system in Africa. Many scholars have rightly pointed out that the American philosophy of adapted education could not have been exported without the close cooperation of American philanthropic associations – the Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Carnegie Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation – and the International Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University.\textsuperscript{32}

In the years 1923-1938, the International Institute received substantial funding for bringing international students to Teachers College. The faculty of Teachers College, especially Paul Monroe, William E. Russell, Isaac Kandel, and later George Counts, helped substantiate the "scientific" foundations of adapted education. Their international students, often referred to by William F. Russell as "Merchants of Light"\textsuperscript{33} who engage in the "international trade" of educational reform, became carriers of a philosophy that was considered anti-assimilationist, democratic, and progressive at that time. Monroe introduced the new applied field of adapted education in his course on "Education and Nationalism: The Development of Retarded National Cultures through Education." In contrast to "commercial education," which erroneously assumed that Africa was a vast reserve of cheap labor that could "be exploited profitably in the interest of the European capitalist," and "missionary education," which induced Africans to discard their customs, religion, and social life, "scientific education" was placed in the hands of experts who would study the social life and needs of the people before developing adapted

educational models that would allow the African to "develop along his own lines" and in conformity with "his unique genius." However, as Ronald Goodenow and Robert Cowen point out, "Teachers College did not have the world to itself." Other American universities such as Stanford, Michigan State, UCLA, and Harvard were also involved in developing countries going back to the turn of this century, although to a much lesser extent.

Adapted education policies and concepts were given official approval in two memoranda of the Advisory Committee on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa issued in 1925 and 1935, in the Colonial Reports for the Crown Colony Cyprus in 1928, and in various statements of principles of the New Zealand Department of Education circulated to all teachers in Maori schools in the nineteen thirties. They also constituted the ideological foundation for what later became known as the Bantu Education Act of 1953 in the Republic of South Africa.

While early comparativists compiled numerous accounts of the successful transfer of adapted education policies around the colonial globe, problems of implementation due to local resistance have been reported relatively late, starting in the nineteen seventies. Studies by Foster, Bude, Berman, Pershanis, Rudden, and Barrington deserve special attention, since they document the massive local resistance and open rejection that made the success of adapted education short-lived. In Liberia, President Barclay criticized the "American friends" who "appear to look upon Liberia as they would upon a Negro community in the southern United States" and demanded that the Liberian Booker Washington Agricultural and Industrial Institute be headed by a black man. When the Phelps-Stokes Foundation replied that there was not one African American qualified to direct the Institute, the rejection was total. In Ghana, both traditional chiefs and western-educated Ghanaians resented the limited opportunity that adapted education, or "Africanization," had to offer in achieving political, social, and economic parity with Europeans. Adapted education seemed to lead to a type of education that was second-rate, rural, and nonacademic, preventing students from further study and urban migration. In Kenya and Nigeria, the official adapted education policy was simply ignored by local groups. The Kikuyus in Kenya established a parallel school system outside the existing system that provided instruction on the basis of an English-type academic curriculum. In Southern Nigeria, the people urged the missions to retain the traditional eight-year school attendance period and a curriculum based on academic subjects rather than on the teaching of manual and agricultural skills. In Lagos, in particular, the downgrading of Yaba Higher College to an adaptationist curriculum led to student protests and the formation of the political Lagos Youth Movement.

For all the groups resisting it, in and outside the United States, adapted education constituted an educational means for reproducing inequality both within a country and between colonial empires and dependent states. In the history of comparative education, adapted education epitomizes the fallacy of educational transfer as a voluntary act of borrowing. It is also a prototype of "misconceived comparative education," in which researchers and educators promoting adapted education, in their view the best available alternative to assimilation, exploitation, and missionary education, were blinded to the patronizing aspects of educational transfer.

AN AGENDA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the previous section, I examined three major assumptions of policy-oriented transfer research. These assumptions, namely system learning, system transfer, and system equity have obscured a more complex understanding of educational transfer. As with any research focus, a view restricted to the contents rather than the processes of educational transfer has served a specific agenda. I assume here that policy-oriented research

34. Paul Monroe, "The Scientific Movement in Education in Foreign Countries," in School and Society 47 (1938), pp. 461-466; see also Fleisch, pp. 43ff.
on contents has been driven mainly by an eagerness to demonstrate the international convergence of educational systems. The more transnational educational transfer we detect, according to this agenda, the more educational convergence is furthered.

I propose that we approach educational convergence with the utmost caution and question the causal relation between global developments and the international convergence of educational systems. Thus, in the previous section, I attempted to argue for a more complex study of educational transfer, one that examines implementation and recontextualization processes, that bears both borrowing and lending systems in mind, and that asks who benefits and who loses. Rather than asking what can be borrowed, I asked how and why did transfer occur? This is a move away from the normative framework of educational transfer to one that is interested in explaining the actual process of transfer.

Whereas most of my analysis was propelled by recent research on educational transfer, I would like to devote the remaining portion of this paper to two additional research areas that have not been sufficiently discussed.

**Transfer as a Political Signal**

Much has been said about the differentiation of various kinds of literacy over the last two decades. We have learned to distinguish between "basic literacy," "cultural literacy," "functional literacy," "media literacy," "test literacy," "school literacy" and many other kinds of literacy. But little has been said about how education has been reframed into an "education for" framework. "Education for retrenchment," "education for modernization," "education for reconciliation," "education for diversity," "education for tolerance," "education for peace and international understanding," "education for democracy" and other kinds of transnational educational programs point to a neglected aspect of educational transfer. I advocate interpreting the various "education for" programs as political campaigns that attempt to signal a particular development to the rest of the world. For instance, many Central and Eastern European countries have dropped the previous term for civic education, "political education," and replaced it with "education for democracy." In the early nineteen eighties, Northern Ireland implemented a curriculum "education for reconciliation," which has been used as a model by policy analysts in other regions of interethnic conflict, for instance, Bosnia and Cyprus.

What is being transferred in these programs is not so much a particular model of education, but the political discourse embedded in a particular educational program. "Education for democracy," for instance, signals that political and economic stability in Central and Eastern Europe for the purpose of international cooperation, economic investment, and integration into the European Union has been achieved. It also signals a move away from earlier associations with civic education, in which schools were used as sites of political indoctrination. Similarly, "education for reconciliation" programs in war-stricken societies demonstrate to the rest of the world the political will to work towards the social integration of conflicting ethnic groups. The program thus helps allocate national resources and attract international funding.

There is a significant transnational flow of such educational programs that merits further scholarly analysis. However, unless we recognize that educational transfer can involve discourses rather than practices, we are unlikely to detect these international movements. It is important to note here that there is a growing strand of research within comparative education theory that draws special attention to the analysis of discourses. Jürgen Schriewer's work on the use of comparison for purposes of "externalization," needs to be credited, in particular, for its focus on educational discourse. He builds on Niklas Luhmann's theory of self-referential systems and succeeds in linking Luhmann's theory to ongoing debates in world systems theory and comparative education. According to Luh

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40. The IEA Civic Education Study, directed by Judith Torney-Purta, is expected to present interesting findings regarding the discursive shift from "civic education" to "education for democracy."

41. Theories and Methods in Comparative Education, ed. by Schriewer & Holmes (note 1); Jürgen Schriewer, Jürgen Henze, Jürgen Wichmann, Peter Krist, Susanne Barucha & Jörn Taubert, "Konstruktion von Internationalität: Referenzhorizonte pädagogischen Wissens im Wandel gesellschaftlicher Systeme (Spanien, Sowjetunion/Russland, China)," in Gesellschaften im Vergleich, ed. by Hartmut Kaufle & Jürgen Schriewer (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 151-258; see also Niklas Luhmann, Essays on Self-Reference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Niklas Luhmann
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reinterpret some of the examples discussed in the previous section of this paper.

The transfer of the American and British decentralization movement is a good case in point. What many European countries have borrowed is not so much concrete models of parental choice or community involvement, but rather the political discourse on less state bureaucracy, efficient management, and schools as markets. How the discourse is translated into practice is a different issue altogether. For instance, the commonality between the U.S. concept of community involvement and that of European educational systems has been miniscule. Nevertheless, discursive transfer has been successful: it triggered a complete restructuring of European educational systems. In practice the restructuring of these systems is quite different from that in the United States or England and Wales. Nevertheless, they seem similar, because they use the same kind of political rhetoric. This is, hence, not a comment on educational convergence per se, but on the convergence of political discourses in education.

The Circularity of Transfer

Having challenged the assumption of system equity, we now can build on this critique. I would like to consider a specific feature of system inequality which deserves our attention. I suggest examining cases where core countries have used dependent states as laboratories and test-sites for contested school reforms. The research objects are the lending systems. How and why do lending systems export school reforms that are contested "at home," test them out in the different context of a dependent state, and then import them back home. Needless to say, using dependent states as laboratories epitomizes the nature of educational transfer as a displacement of domestically contested school reforms.

As discussed earlier, the politics of borrowing has preoccupied comparative researchers in the last few years. Several scholars have argued that borrowed educational models have helped policy analysts to narrow down policy options, accelerated the bargaining process, and ultimately helped them to make their case against competing policy options. In addition to the important work on the politics of borrowing, I am pro-


42. Linda Chisholm, "The Restructuring of South African Education and Training in Comparative Context," in Education after Apartheid, ed. by Peter Kallaway (Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town Press 1997), pp. 50-67. Chisholm analyzes why post-Apartheid politicians and policy makers have adopted a language of educational reform in South Africa that is in line with neo-liberal and market-oriented strategies found in other parts of the world.

43. For instance, Robertson & Waltman 1993 or Halpin & Troya 1995.
posing here to examine also the politics of lending. This focus on lending systems that use dependent states as test-sites for domestically contested reforms, would help us understand that a transfer is not always linear. Rather, there are cases in which the transfer can be conceived as circular, moving back and forth between lender and borrower.

In the history of education, we can find many examples of dependent states used as laboratories. When studying these cases, we need to consider that in the first three decades of this century, educational researchers were in the company of many other researchers who used colonies and dependent states as objects of study. Many scholars, first and foremost anthropologists, were fascinated by the idea of studying "primitive" societies in order to understand how more complex and modern societies function.\(^{44}\) They were seen as laboratories of modernization, where researchers were able to observe and document the transition from traditionalism to modernization, so to speak, from scratch.

In education, renowned scholars did not conceal their excitement about this line of research. Compared to many other scholars of the time, John Dewey was hesitant to fully embrace this line of research. He moved back and forth on this issue. However, his visit to Mexico in 1926 was a turning point. Upon his return from the Mexican rural education program, he "revived his faith" in these countries.\(^{45}\) He was fascinated by the opportunities of "educationally new" countries for "starting afresh, with the most enlightened theories and practices of the most educationally advanced countries." Complimenting the rural education programs in Mexico, he stated: "I have long had a pet idea that "backward" countries have a great chance educationally; that when they once start in the school-road they are less hampered by tradition and institutionalism than are countries where schools are held by customs which have hardened through the years."


In contrast to Dewey, Isaac Kandel can be regarded as a true believer in this strand of research. He hoped to gain insights from peoples who are "just beginning to go to school" to generate a more comprehensive educational theory. He writes in the 1931 Yearbook of the International Institute: "Education in colonial dependencies cannot be regarded as an isolated matter in which the educator has no concern. Actually these areas, because from some points of view conditions are simpler and more easily subject to analysis, constitute laboratories in which the new philosophy of education can be tested perhaps better than under the complicated conditions of Europe and the United States where certain traditions have long become established. It is not improbable that experimentation with peoples who are, as it were, just beginning to go to school in time have important contributions to make to educational theory in general."\(^{46}\)

While little has been written about educational theorists that used colonies as laboratories, even less has been published about how policy analysts have instrumentalized dependent states to test out school reforms that have been contested "at home." My own research on this topic has been strongly influenced by postcolonial studies of education, a newly emerging transdisciplinary field that has found more resonance and recognition in comparative literature, anthropology, and history than in educational research.\(^{47}\) Postcolonial studies suggests that contemporary policies, practices, and discourses of education in European countries, China, Russia, Japan, the United States, and other former colonial empires have been significantly influenced by the fact that these countries were colonial empires that used dependent states as laboratories and test-sites for school reform. This new genre of research has developed only recently, and its research agenda is quite different from that of colo-


nial studies of education, a well-established educational research field within history of education and comparative education. Scholars in colonial studies of education have examined the impact of colonial education on the educational systems in former colonies. In contrast, scholars in postcolonial studies have been interested in uncovering the colonial map underlying contemporary and past educational policies, practices, and discourses in former colonial empires.

An example of postcolonial studies is Ann Laura Stoler’s work on Dutch colonial rule in Surinam in which she found that Dutch administrators tested several welfare and educational reforms first in Surinam, and then reintroduced them in the Netherlands. In a similar case, Gauri Viswanathan uses archival data to document that the combination of English literature and English culture in one single subject matter was first implemented in higher education in colonial India. At that time the link between literature and culture (values, norms, beliefs) was strongly resented in the mother country and was seen as a threat to the secularized English school system. A more recent example linking postcolonial studies (in its broadest sense) to international educational development and comparative education is the World Bank’s involvement in Russian educational reform. In 1994, the Bank intended to implement a comprehensive voucher plan for Russian public schools, which, if it had succeeded, would have been used for other postsocialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe and for western capitalist countries.

In an attempt to formulate an agenda for further research, I suggest that attention be given to discursive practices that result from transfer and to circular patterns of lending. Both research foci would help us to understand how educational transfer is used as deterritorialization or political displacement of domestically contested school reforms. Given the recent developments in which programs of Comparative and International Education have begun to link international developments to domestic issues, these new avenues of research are worthwhile to examine in more detail.

52. At Teachers College, Columbia University, the programs Comparative and International Education and International Educational Development became a part of the newly formed Department of International and Transcultural Studies in 1997. The relocation has produced rigorous intellectual debates about the future of the field and challenged the two programs to reflect on how international developments could be linked more closely to domestic issues.