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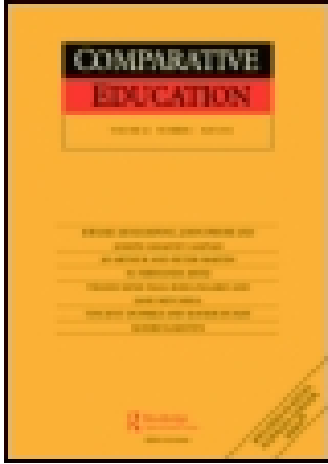
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Big Policies/Small World: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy

STEPHEN J. BALL

ABSTRACT In this paper the primary emphasis is upon the general and common elements in contemporary, international education policy, but nonetheless the discussion also considers the processes of translation and recontextualisation involved in the realisation or enactment of policy in specific national and local settings. A set of generic ‘problems’ which constitute the contemporary social, political and economic conditions for education and social policy making are adumbrated. The emergence of ideological and ‘magical’ solutions to these problems is identified and the means of the dissemination of these solutions are discussed. A relationship between the global market and the marketisation of education is suggested and explored.

Introduction

One of the tensions which runs through all varieties of policy analysis is that between the need to attend to the local particularities of policy making and policy enactment and the need to be aware of general patterns and apparent commonalities or convergence across localities (see Whitty & Edwards (1998) for further discussion). That tension is central to this paper and this special issue. In this paper my primary emphasis is upon the general and common elements in contemporary, international education policy but I will also address the processes of translation and recontextualisation involved in the realisation or enactment of policy in specific national and local settings. However, one immediate limitation upon the generality of my discussion is its focus upon Western and Northern developed economies, although a great deal of what I have to say has considerable relevance to countries such as Colombia, Chile, Portugal, Japan and some of the ex-Warsaw Pact nations of Eastern Europe. The paper has three main sections. The first sketches in a set of generic ‘problems’ which constitute the contemporary social, political and economic conditions for education and social policy making. The second discusses the idea of ideological and ‘magical’ solutions to these problems and the dissemination of these solutions. The third and last returns to the issue of recontextualisation.

Post-modernity and the Global Economy

As Brown & Lauder (1996) explained, ‘The significance of globalisation to questions of national educational and economic development can be summarised in terms of a change in the rules of eligibility, engagement and wealth creation’ (p. 2). As regards eligibility,

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individual governments, even the apparently most powerful, have experienced a reduction in their ability to control or supervise the activities of multinational corporations (MNCs) and maintain the integrity of their economic borders. This results in the loss of 'Keynesian capacity', that is the ability to pursue independent reflationary policies. However, it is important not to overstate the case here and succumb to what Weiss (1997) called the 'myth of the powerless state'. She argued that within the processes of globalisation 'domestic state capacities differ' (Weiss, 1997, p. 26) and that 'the proliferation of regional agreements suggest that we can expect to see more and more of a different kind of state taking shape in the world arena, one that is reconstituting its power at the centre of alliances formed either within or outside the state' (Weiss, 1997, p. 27) (see also Taylor *et al.*, 1997, Chapter 4). In other words, we need to be wary of what Harvey (1996) called 'globaloney'. The 'globalisation thesis' can be used to explain almost anything and everything and is ubiquitous in current policy documents and policy analysis.

We also need to acknowledge here the national changes in the form and scope of state activities in many Western economies. Contracting, deregulation and privatisation have reduced, in both practical and ideological terms, the capacity for direct state intervention. That is not to say that these devices do not provide new forms of state steering and regulation (see below). The rules of engagement describe the relationship between governments, employers and workers. The key change here, at least in the West, is from a Fordist, welfare corporatism to a 'market model' wherein 'the prosperity of workers will depend on an ability to trade their skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial acumen in an unfettered global market place' (Brown & Lauder, 1996, p. 3). And the new rules of wealth creation are replacing the logic of Fordist mass production with new 'knowledge-based' systems of flexible production.

However, there are three crucial caveats to the last point. First, Fordist production systems in the West have not so much been replaced as 'exported', cheap labour and unregulated conditions of labour in some developing economies make the relocation of mass production an attractive proposition to MNCs. Furthermore, while MNCs are increasingly dominant, a great deal of capital activity remains 'nationalistic'. Second, even within the developed Western and Asian Tiger economies the new logic of flexible specialisation and 'just-in-time' production (Swynegedouw, 1986) is not an inclusive one—low-skill, insecure jobs, particularly in the service sectors, are the main areas of expansion of work in all of these economies. And these 'new' jobs are also bringing about the feminisation of the labour market. Harvey (1989) made the key point that 'Under conditions of flexible accumulation, it seems as if alternative labour systems can exist side by side within the same space in such a way as to enable capitalist entrepreneurs to choose at will between them' (p. 187). Thus, thirdly, the polarisations of Fordist/post-Fordist—modernist/post-modernist economies are not so much alternative forms of capital and regulation as 'a complex of oppositions expressive of the cultural contradictions of capitalism' (Harvey, 1989, p. 39).

The two general points then that I want to make here are (1) that things have changed but not absolutely and (2) that while these changes have produced new 'first-order' problems, in terms of the demand for new skills for example, they have also produced new 'second-order' problems, such as threats to the maintenance of political legitimacy and authority. Not everyone has an equal 'stake' in the success of the new economic order. The core-periphery structure of the global economy and global and national labour markets appears to be closely paralleled in the emerging 'star'/'sink' school polarisations within 'market-reformed' education systems.

There is no way that I can follow through properly all aspects of this account of the role of globalisation on education in the space available here (see Harvey, 1989; Brown & Lauder, 1996; Taylor *et al.*, 1997; Jones, 1998). And, indeed, I am not concerned with conveying the

full complexity of these global changes but rather with isolating some of those aspects of change which might allow us to understand the struggles taking place over education policy. However, I do want to pick out two further specific and related aspects of global change which I will suggest have particular significance in making sense of the current 'turn' in education and social policy making. They are, in short uncertainty and congestion.

Harvey (1989) suggested that the rhythm and content of daily life has become both more ephemeral and volatile. Commodity production increasingly emphasises 'the values and virtues of instantaneity and disposability' (p. 286) and is increasingly focused upon 'sign systems rather than with commodities themselves' (p. 287). The latter, among many other factors, has contributed to a 'crisis of representation' (Harvey, 1989, p. 298). All of this provides a context for the 'crack-up of consensus' (Harvey, 1989, p. 286). It constitutes, in part, what Pfeil (1988) called the 'postmodern structure of feeling' and forbears 'the terror of contingency from which all possibility of eventful significance has been drained' (p. 386).

The central value system, to which capitalism has always appealed to validate and gauge its actions, is dematerialized and shifting, time horizons are collapsing, and it is hard to tell exactly what space we are in when it comes to assessing causes and effects, meanings or values. (Harvey, 1989, p. 298)

In other words 'disorganised capitalism' (Lash & Urry, 1987) may be beginning to dissolve the conditions of consensus and social cohesion upon which it depends in order to continue. One particular and very material aspect of the new politics of uncertainty is the very dramatic change in the trajectory of economic growth and patterns of employment which provided the basis for the massive post-war expansion in the middle classes and the creation of the so-called 'new middle class'. Their 'imagined futures' and those of their offspring are now under threat from the 'unmanaged congestion' in the old and new professions and in management positions (Jordon, *et al.*, 1994). One effect of this has been a loss of support among the new middle classes for efforts to democratise education and social policy. Education is being 'transformed back into an "oligarchic" good' (Jordon *et al.*, 1994, p. 212) and progressive experimentation in educational methods is being replaced by a set of reinvented traditional pedagogies.

Magical Solutions?

If these various 'policyscapes' (Appadurai, 1990) of global change adumbrate a set of 'problems' and challenges for education and social policy, what then are the 'solutions' in play from which makers of policy might 'choose' as modes of response? As I shall go on to suggest choose is an inappropriate word here. Brown & Lauder (1996) suggested two ideal types of response: neo-Fordism, which 'can be characterised in terms of creating greater market flexibility through a reduction in social overheads and the power of trade unions, the privatisation of public utilities and the welfare state, as well as the celebration of competitive individualism' (p. 5) and post-Fordism, which can 'be defined in terms of the development of the state as a "strategic trader" shaping the direction of the national economy through investment in key economic sectors and in the development of human capital' (p. 5). This latter is close to Hutton's (1995) Rhineland model of capitalism. In practice, as is ever the case, the differences between states or political parties in these terms often seem to be more a matter of emphasis than any 'clear blue water'. While superficially at least the neo-Fordist 'solution' seems to be in the ascendant in education policy making, aspects of the post-Fordist scenario are clearly in evidence even in the practices of the most neoliberal of governments. Having said that, the differences between the positions are not insignificant.

This policy dualism is well represented in contemporary education policies which tie together individual, consumer choice in education markets with rhetorics and policies aimed at furthering national economic interests. Carter & O'Neill (1995) summarised evidence on the state of education policy making in their two-volume collection on international perspectives on educational reform by identifying what they called 'the new orthodoxy'—'a shift is taking place' they said in the relationship between politics, government and education in complex Westernised post-industrialised countries at least (p. 9). They cited five main elements to this new orthodoxy.

- (1) Improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade.
- (2) Enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies.
- (3) Attaining more direct control over curriculum content and assessment.
- (4) Reducing the costs to government of education.
- (5) Increasing community input to education by more direct involvement in school decision making and pressure of market choice.

I shall return to the substance of this reform package below. Avis *et al.* (1996) made a similar claim about post-compulsory education and training and what they call the 'new consensus'. Indeed, the European Union (1995) *White Paper on Education and Training: towards the learning society* announced 'The end of the debate on educational principles' (p. 22). Concepts such as the 'learning society', the 'knowledge-based economy', etc., are potent policy condensates within this consensus. They serve and symbolise the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives. Levin, (1998) suggests that it is sometimes the politics of the sign rather than the substance of policies that moves across national borders.

It would be ridiculous to claim that there is one or even one set of key ideas or influences which underpin this package. However, it would be equally ridiculous to ignore the links and correspondences which run through it. Five elements or sets of influences are identifiable. I will adumbrate these very crudely. Some of these have an analytic status, while others are more substantive. One is neoliberalism or what might be called the ideologies of the market. These set the spontaneous and unplanned but innovative responses of the market form over and against the partisan, inefficient bureaucracy of planned change. This has been of particular importance in the UK in the formation of those policies often referred to as 'Thatcherism' (see Ball, 1990) and the UK education reforms certainly provided a test-bed to which other governments at least attended when contemplating their own reforms (see Whitty & Edwards, 1998).

A second is new institutional economics, 'which sought to explain the workings of social life and its various institutions, and the construction of relationships and co-ordination of individual and collective behaviour, in terms of the choices and actions of the rational actor' (Seddon, 1997, p. 176). This involves the use of a combination of devolution, targets and incentives to bring about institutional redesign. It draws both on recent economic theory and various industrial practices, sometimes referred to as Mitsubishi-ism—the replacement of task specification by target setting (see below). In education the impact of such ideas is evident in the myriad of 'site-based management' initiatives in countries and states around the world and the social psychology of institutional reinvention proselytised in texts on 'the self-managing school' and 'school improvement'. Chubb & Moe (1990) also articulated what they described as 'a theoretical perspective linking the organisation and performance of schools to their institutional environments' (p. 185).

A third influence, which interweaves with both of the above, is what Lyotard (1984) called performativity—'be operational (that is, commensurable) or disappear' (p. xxiv).

'Performativity is a principle of governance which establishes strictly functional relations between a state and its inside and outside environments' (Yeatman, 1994, pp. 111). In other words performativity is a steering mechanism. A form of indirect steering or steering at a distance which replaces intervention and prescription with target setting, accountability and comparison. Furthermore, as part of the transformation of education and schooling and the expansion of the power of capital, performativity provides sign systems which 'represent' education in a self-referential and reified form for consumption. And, indeed, many of the specific technologies of performativity in education (total quality management, human resources management, etc.) are borrowed from commercial settings.

Number four, is public choice theory. This is a particularly important component of US attempts at education reform (see again Chubb & Moe, 1990), but choice is a key aspect of Hayekian neoliberalism as well (see Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (1994) for a review of choice policies in six countries).

Fifth and finally, there is new managerialism, that is the insertion of the theories and techniques of business management and the 'cult of excellence' into public sector institutions. Managerialism is, in this sense, both a delivery system and a vehicle for change. This 'new' managerialism stresses constant attention to 'quality', being close to the customer and the value of innovation (Newman & Clarke, 1994, p. 15). In the education sector the headteacher is the main 'carrier' and embodiment of new managerialism and is crucial to the transformation of the organisational regimes of schools (Grace, 1995), that is the dismantling of bureau-professional organisational regimes and their replacement with market-entrepreneurial regimes (Clarke & Newman, 1992).

New management also involves 'new' forms of employee involvement, in particular through the cultivation of 'corporate culture' by means of which managers 'seek to delineate, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they postulate as desirable' (Du Gay, 1996, p. 61). Such developments are deeply paradoxical. On the one hand, they represent a move away from Taylorist, 'low-trust' methods of employee control. Managerial responsibilities are delegated and initiative and problem solving are highly valued. On the other hand, new forms of surveillance and self-monitoring are put in place, e.g. appraisal systems, target-setting, and output comparisons (see Muller (1998) for a discussion of different forms of self-regulation—competence based and performance based). This is what Peters & Waterman (1982) referred to as 'simultaneously loose and tight' or what Du Gay (1996) called 'controlled de-control'.

The dissemination of these influences internationally can be understood in at least two ways. Firstly and most straightforwardly, there is a flow of ideas through social and political networks; the 'inter-national circulation of ideas' (Popkewitz, 1996). For example, by processes of policy borrowing (Halpin & Troyna, 1995)—both the UK and New Zealand have served as 'political laboratories' for reform—and the activities of groups such as the Heritage Foundation, the Mont Pelerin Society and the Institute of Economic Affairs, although the effects here should not be over estimated. The movement of graduates, in particular from US universities, is also important (see Vanegas & Ball, 1996). In some contexts this movement 'carries' ideas and creates a kind of cultural and political dependency which works to devalue or deny the feasibility of 'local' solutions. As Max-Neef *et al.* (1991) put it

If as a Latin American economist I wish to become an expert in Latin American development problems, it is necessary to study in the United States or in Europe to be respectable in the eyes of both my Southern and Northern colleagues. It goes without saying that it is not only dangerous but absurd. (p. 98)

There is also the activity of various ‘policy entrepreneurs’, groups and individuals who ‘sell’ their solutions in the academic and political market-place—the ‘self-managing school’ and ‘school effectiveness’ and ‘choice’ are all current examples of such entrepreneurship which takes place through academic channels—journals, books, etc.—and via the performances of charismatic, travelling academics. (See Levin (1998) for an epidemiological account of the ‘spread’ of policy.)

Lastly, there is the sponsorship and, in some respects, enforcement of particular policy ‘solutions’ by multilateral agencies (see Jones, 1998). The World Bank is particularly important here, as Jones (1998) puts it: ‘The bank’s preconditions for education can only be understood as an ideological stance, in promoting an integrated world system along market lines’ (p. 152). However, it is equally important to understand a second aspect of the dissemination or institutionalisation of these influences upon reform; their establishment as the new orthodoxy, that is as a discursive framework within which and limited by which solutions are ‘thought’. There is a concomitance if not a correspondence here between the logic of globalisation—as a world free-trading system—and the new terrain of thinking about social policy. Jones (1998) again notes that ‘Notions of the public good shift in order to accommodate reduced expectations about accountability, regulation and taxation, which in turn lead to not only reduced but transformed expectations about what public services and infrastructure consist of’ (p. 146). This concomitance is most obvious in what Brown & Lauder (1996) called neo-Fordism: ‘the route to national salvation in the context of the global knowledge wars is through the survival of the fittest, based on an extension of parental choice in a market of competing schools, colleges and universities’ (pp. 6–7). That is, ‘education systems have been made objects of micro-economic reform with educational activities being turned into saleable or corporatised market products as part of a national efficiency drive’ (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p. 77; (see Welch (1998) on ‘efficiency’). Such reforms rest upon two starkly opposed chronotopics—the grey, slow bureaucracy and politically correct, committee, corridor grimness of the city hall welfare state as against the fast, adventurous, carefree, gung-ho, open-plan, computerised, individualism of choice, autonomous ‘enterprises’ and sudden opportunity.

This last point serves to remind us that policies are both systems of values and symbolic systems; ways of representing, accounting for and legitimating political decisions. Policies are articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for those effects. In particular, I want to suggest here that advocacy of the market or commercial form for educational reform as the ‘solution’ to educational problems is a form of ‘policy magic’ or what Stronach (1993) called ‘witchcraft’: ‘a form of reassurance as well as a rational response to economic problems’ (p. 6). One of the attractions here is the simplicity of the formula on which the magic is based.

social markets/institutional devolution = raising standards (of educational performance) = increased international competitiveness

Such simplicities have a particular attraction when set within the ‘conditions of uncertainty’ or what Dror (1986) called ‘adversity’. In Stronach’s (1993) terms the repetitive circularities of ‘the market solution’ display ‘the logics of witchcraft and the structures of ritual’ (p. 26). It links individual (choice) and institutional (autonomy/responsiveness) transformation to universal salvation: a transformation from mundane citizen to archetype, from dependent subject to active consumer/citizen, and from dull bureaucracy to innovative, entrepreneurial management (of course the policies of welfarism can be subjected to a similar sort of analysis). ‘Ritual typically associates a personal with a cosmic pole, around which prosperity, morality and civilization are clustered’ (Stronach, 1993, p. 23). Minor personal and physical

changes are linked to large scale transformation. Again then, all of this is founded upon the play of opposites, order against chaos and the redress of crisis. Employing a similar language, Hughes & Tight (1995) argued that concepts such as ‘the stakeholder’ and the ‘learning society’ represent powerful myths for projecting futuristic visions which determine the on going principles on which education policy and practice are based. And, as Newman (1984) put it, ‘The libertarian revolt against the modern state is first and foremost a campaign for the hearts and minds of the American people’ (p. 159).

For politicians the ‘magic’ of the market works in several senses. On the one hand, it is a ‘hands off’ reform, a non-interventionary intervention—a basic trope of the conjurer, now you see it now you don’t!. It distances the reformer from the outcomes of reform. Blame and responsibility are also devolved or contracted out (see below). And yet, by use of target setting and performative techniques, ‘steering at a distance’ can be achieved, what Kikert (1991) called ‘a new paradigm of public governance’ (p. 1). On the other hand, these policies also carry with them political risks, in so far, as noted already, as they may disable direct forms of control and can leave the politician ‘in office’ but not ‘in power’.

As indicated above, one key facet of the policy process and the formulation of new orthodoxies is critique. New policies feed off and gain legitimacy from the deriding and demolition of previous policies (see Ball, 1990) which are thus rendered ‘unthinkable’. The ‘new’ are marked out by and gain credence from their qualities of difference and contrast. In education in particular, part of the attraction of a new policy often rests on the specific allocation of ‘blame’ from which its logic derives. Blame may either be located in the malfunctions or heresies embedded in the policies it replaces and/or is redistributed by the new policy within the education system itself and is often personified—currently in the UK in the ‘incompetent teacher’ and ‘failing school’ (see Thrupp (1998) on the politics of blame).

Stated in more general terms, two complexly related policy agendas are discernible in all the heat and noise of reform. The first aims to tie education more closely to national economic interests, while the second involves a decoupling of education from direct state control. The first rests on a clear articulation and assertion by the state of its requirements of education, while the second gives at least the appearance of greater autonomy to educational institutions in the delivery of those requirements. The first involves a reaffirmation of the state functions of education as a ‘public good’, while the second subjects education to the disciplines of the market and the methods and values of business and redefines it as a competitive private good. In many respects educational institutions are now being expected to take on the qualities and characteristics of ‘fast capitalism’ (Gee & Lankshear, 1995) and this involves not only changes in organisational practices and methods but also the adoption of new social relationships, values and ethical principles.

We can see these two political agendas being played out in a variety of countries in terms of an ensemble of generic policies—parental choice and institutional competition, site-based autonomy, managerialism, performative steering and curricula fundamentalism—which nonetheless have local variations, twists and nuances—hybridity—and different degrees of application—intensity. The purest and most intense versions of this ensemble are evident in places such as England, New Zealand and Alberta (Canada). Mixed and low-intensity versions are evident in places such as France, Colombia and many US and Australian states. Places such as Portugal and Sweden display hybrid but low-intensity versions. (See the discussion of recontextualisation below.)

While previous regimes of unthinkability derived rhetorical energy from the critique of élitism, one of the mechanisms involved in the establishment of the new orthodoxy in education has been a critique of the press for equity and social justice as part of the diagnosis

of the existing 'inadequacies' of education—what I have elsewhere called 'the discourse of derision' (Ball, 1990; see also below). The World Bank sees equity as one of the residual concerns of governments in marketised education systems. However, as a part of the logic of the new orthodoxy the social and welfare purposes of education are systematically played down directly (as in the World Bank) or, in effect, education is increasingly subject to exchange value criteria. That is, education is not simply modelled on the methods and values of capital, it is itself drawn into the commodity form. Within all this equity issues do not so much disappear entirely as become 'framed and reframed'; 'competing discourses are "stitched together" in the new policies' (Taylor, 1995, p. 9). The meanings of equity are refracted, reworked and realised in new ways 'glossing over the different perspectives of key players' (Taylor, 1995, p. 10).

In effect, in education and social policy generally the new orthodoxy, the market solution, is a new master narrative, a deeply fissured but primary discourse encompassing 'the very nature of economics and therefore the potential range and scope of policies themselves' (Cerny, 1990, p. 205). The discourse constructs the topic and, as with any discourse, it appears across a range of texts, forms of conduct and at a number of different sites at any one time. Discursive events 'refer to the one and the same object ... there is a regular style and ... constancy of concepts ... and "strategy" and a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern' (Cousins & Hussain, 1984, pp. 84–85). This discourse can be seen at work as much in the 1980s Hollywood 'male-rampage' movies (Pfeil, 1995), part of what Ross (1990) described as 'the desperate attempts, under Reagan, to reconstruct the institution of national heroism, more often than not in the form of white male rogue outlaws for whom the liberal solution of "soft" state-regulated law enforcement was presented as having failed' (p. 33). Equally it can be seen in the UK in the commodification of academic research, in the celebration of the parent-chooser-hero of so many market policy texts in education, in the refurbished, customer-friendly, competitive school, the 'quality-guru' educational consultants and quick-fix policy entrepreneurs, Channel One television in US schools and 'designer-label' uniforms in Japanese high schools, 'early-learning' educational games shops and niche marketing, 'hot-house', nursery schools. 'Educational democracy is redefined as consumer democracy in the educational marketplace. *Buying* an education becomes a substitute for *getting* an education' (Kenway *et al.*, 1993, p. 116). It is not simply that publicly provided school systems are being inducted into quasi-market practices but that education in its various forms, at many points, and in a variety of ways is inducted into the market episteme—a non-unified, multiple and complex field of play which realises a dispersion of relationships, subjectivities, values, objects, operations and concepts.

Localism and Recontextualisation

While it may well be possible to discern a set of principles or a theoretical model underlying policy—neoliberalism, new institutional economics, public choice theory or whatever—these rarely if ever translate into policy texts or practice in direct or pristine form. National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice (Ball, 1994).

Policy ideas are also received and interpreted differently within different political architectures (Cerny, 1990), national infrastructures (Hall, 1986) and national ideologies—a

national ideology is 'a set of values and beliefs that frames the practical thinking and action of agents of the main institutions of a nation-state at a given point in time' (van Zanten, 1997, p. 352) and business cultures (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1994). The latter conducted research on 15,000 business managers in seven different countries and identified distinct contrasts in the mind-sets and ideologies of their respondents. Unfortunately, comparative educational research on the formation, reception and interpretation of policy in these terms is thin on the ground (see Dale and Ozga (1993) on the new right in the UK and New Zealand and van Zanten (1997) on the education of immigrants in France).

In our attempts to understand education policies comparatively and globally the complex relationships between ideas, the dissemination of ideas and the recontextualisation (see Bernstein, 1996) of ideas remain a central task. As Bernstein (1996) put it, 'Every time a discourse moves, there is space for ideology to play' (p. 24). Recontextualisation takes place within and between both 'official' and 'pedagogic' fields, the former 'created and dominated by the state' and the latter consisting of 'pedagogues in schools and colleges, and departments of education, specialised journals, private research foundations' (Bernstein, 1996, p. 48). These fields are constituted differently in different societies. The new orthodoxies of education policy are grafted onto and realised within very different national and cultural contexts and are affected, inflected and deflected by them. See, for example, Taylor *et al.*'s (1997) case studies of Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and Australia. They concluded that 'there is no essential determinacy to the ways in which globalisation pressures work, since for various globalisation pressures there are also sites of resistance and counter movements' (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p. 72). (See Colclough & Lewin (1993, p. 256) for a similar argument).

The fields of recontextualisation are, as Muller (1998) puts it, 'fields of contest' involving 'various social fractions with different degrees of social power sponsoring' different 'pedagogic regimes' (p. 190). The five generic policies adumbrated above are polyvalent; they are translated into particular interactive and sustainable practices in complex ways. They interact with, interrupt or conflict with other policies in play and long-standing indigenous policy traditions. They enter rather than simply change existing power relations and cultural practices. We can generalise here from Offe's (1984) comment that

... the real social effects ('impact') of a law or institutional service are not determined by the wording of the laws and statutes ('policy out'), but instead are generated primarily as a consequence of social disputes and conflicts, for which state policy merely establishes the location and timing of the contest, its subject matters and 'the rules of the game'. (p. 186)

Such disputes and conflicts take place at a number of levels—national, local and institutional. Policy analysis requires an understanding that is based not on the generic or local, macro- or micro-constraint or agency but on the changing relationships between them and their inter-penetration.

Conclusion

What I have tried to do in this paper is to take several things seriously, but also take them together.

- (1) To recognise the 'problems' of globalisation which frame and 'produce' the contemporary 'problems' of education.
- (2) To identify a set of generic 'solutions' to these problems and acknowledge their effects in educational reform and restructuring.
- (3) However, to suggest that these 'solutions' also have a magical form and ritual function.

- (4) That they become an inescapable form of reassurance; they discursively constrain the possibilities of response and are borrowed, enforced and adopted through various patterns of social contact, political and cultural deference and supranational agency requirements.
- (5) Finally, to register nonetheless the importance of local politics and culture and tradition and the processes of interpretation and struggle involved in translating these generic solutions into practical policies and institutional practices.

I want to end by returning to the side of my argument which is concerned with the generic aspects of education policy rather than its specifics and to Offe's (1984) 'real social effects'. My point is that careful investigation of local variations, exceptions and hybridity should not divert attention from the general patterns of practical and ideological, first-and second-order effects achieved by the ensemble of influences and policy mechanisms outlined above. That is to say, even in their different realisations, this ensemble changes the way that education is organised and delivered but also changes the meaning of education and what it means to be educated and what it means to learn. One key aspect of the reworking of meanings here is the increasing commodification of knowledge (which again parallels changes in the role of knowledge in the economy). Educational provision is itself increasingly made susceptible to profit and educational processes play their part in the creation of the enterprise culture and the cultivation of enterprising subjects (see Kenway *et al.*, 1993). The framework of possibilities, the vocabularies of motives and the bases of legitimation (including values and ethics) within which educational decisions are made are all discursively reformed. But crucially these mechanisms and influences are also not just about new organisational forms or 'worker incentives' or rearticulated professional ethics; they are about access to and the distribution of educational opportunity in terms of race, class, gender and physical ability. The diversi-fication and re-hierarchisation of schooling in various educational market-places display an uncanny concomitance with widespread middle-class concerns about maintaining social advantage in the face of national and international labour market congestion. Thus, both in relation to patterns of convergence in education policy and the recontextualisation of policy, we need to be asking the question, 'whose interests are served?'

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