

**Comparative Education as Science and Storytelling:  
An inquiry into the construction and advocacy of education  
'best practice'**

Euan Douglas Auld

Thesis submitted to the UCL Institute of Education

For the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

February 2016

## Declarations

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without the proper acknowledgement of the author.

Word count (exclusive of appendices, bibliography): 79,801

Signature: Euan Douglas Auld  
Date: 15/06/2016

## ABSTRACT

Education reform around the world is increasingly fuelled by economic imperatives and premised on evidence of ‘what works’ in ‘world class’ systems. In parallel, an applied form of Comparative Education (CE) has emerged, promoted by a community of international organisations, consultancies, and entrepreneurs, who use comparative data to identify and promote ‘best practices’. Their approach to comparisons has been described as a ‘new paradigm’ (NP), and though scholars acknowledge their influence, they are less clear about the characteristics of this diverse community, or how knowledge is ‘being done’.

This thesis subjects the NP to in-depth analysis, addressing three main questions: (1) What are the NP’s inherent and distinctive characteristics? (2) How does the NP overcome the issues associated with the identification and transfer of education ‘best practices’? (3) How did the NP influence the review of the National Curriculum in England? The analysis is guided by the concept of *homo narrans*, which asserts that we have an innate tendency *to communicate* and *to make sense of existence* through stories. These two aspects open the inquiry into two levels of analysis, which are informed by political science, and the philosophy of history and of consciousness, respectively.

To address RQ1, a schema of plot is developed and combined with principles from *genre analysis*. Its symbolism is then explored through a historical-philosophical review. To address RQ2, the plot schema is combined with *move analysis* to analyse how advocates construct persuasive narratives that identify straightforward solutions. RQ3 focuses on the role of the NP in the recent review of the National Curriculum. I argue that the NP gains persuasive power as part of a broader storyline about the nature of social reality, and by constructing a conceptual system that is internally coherent, but which fails to overcome the issues associated with education transfer.



## Table of Contents

### Chapter I - Introduction

The emergence of a 'new paradigm'.....	10
Thesis aims & guiding questions.....	12
Thesis structure and development.....	16
Research contribution.....	19

### Chapter II - Conceptualizing the 'new paradigm'

Introduction.....	22
The NP as a comparative genre.....	23
Perspectives on policy: the <i>narrative turn</i> .....	27
Policy, discourse, and narrative: three sides of the same coin?.....	29
Deconstructing the story.....	30
The story of decline.....	31
The story of control.....	32
The comparative turn.....	33
Summary.....	34

### Chapter III - Inside the NP: Narrative structure and elements

Introduction.....	36
The narrative policy framework (NPF) .....	36
Narrative form and elements.....	38
The point of departure: artistic differences with the NPF.....	39
Using narrative to access discourse.....	40
Operationalizing plot: aims and approach.....	41
Overview of narrative stages and content.....	44
1. <i>The imagined ordinary</i> .....	44
2. <i>The call: inciting incident and crisis rhetoric</i> .....	45
3. <i>The designation of blame</i> .....	46
4. <i>The path to redemption</i> .....	47
5. <i>The idealised future</i> .....	48
Summary.....	49

### Chapter IV - Analytical framework: actors and levels

Introduction.....	52
The NPF's guide to analysis: advocacy coalitions.....	52
Discourse coalitions: the policy raconteurs.....	54
Levels and dynamics.....	55
Guidelines for analysis: simultaneous operation at three levels.....	58
Summary.....	61

### Chapter V - Characteristics of the NP: Discourse and meaning-making

Introduction.....	64
(a) Genre analysis: <i>what's in a story?</i> .....	65
(b) Myths and meaning-making.....	68
The search for meaning: theoretical perspectives.....	69

Existential angst and systems of order.....	72
The seduction of the new, and ersatz religion.....	75
Self-interpretation, eschatology, and the meaning of history.....	78
Summary.....	88

## **Chapter VI - Taming the stream of being**

Introduction.....	90
Beyond philosophy: ‘what works’ as ‘actual knowledge’.....	90
The calculable world: (Re)constructing the cosmos.....	92
Initial inquiry into the NP’s comparative method.....	97
Clarifying the paradox of control.....	99
Confronting the paradox.....	101
The <i>libido dominandi</i> and the prohibition of questions.....	102
Reification, and the problem of cognizance.....	105
Achieving narrative coherence.....	108
Summary.....	109

## **Chapter VII - Science, Storytelling, and the politics of expertise**

Introduction.....	111
Method: Analysis of narrative moves and strategies.....	111
Selection of sample texts.....	112
Act 1. A platform for advocacy: the imagined ordinary and ‘the call’.....	116
<i>Move one</i> . The logic of action.....	111
<i>Move two</i> . Establishing expertise.....	129
Act 2. The story of control: buttressing beliefs & (re)interpreting reality.....	135
<i>Move 3</i> . Restrict analytic focus.....	135
<i>Move 4</i> . Draw recommendations: making causal inferences.....	143
The Ocean of facts: notes on the path(s) to salvation.....	152
<i>Move 5</i> . Qualify recommendations.....	156
Act 3. Fortunate of fatal? .....	161
<i>Move 6</i> . Present the idealised and/or tragic futures.....	161
Summary.....	163

## **Chapter VIII - Constructing a framework for learning**

Introduction.....	166
Method and process.....	167
1. The review of the National Curriculum.....	169
The institutionalization of the NP.....	169
The remit for the review of the National Curriculum.....	174
The genesis of Could Do Better: ‘the right kind of paradigm’.....	177
2. Could Do Better: Constructing a framework for learning.....	179
The logic of action.....	180
The battle of expertise.....	184
The story of control.....	187
(a) Framework and assumptions: learning how to learn.....	187
(b) Curriculum coherence.....	188
(c) Control factors.....	190

(d) Critical realism and caveats.....	195
One tiny bit of one control factor: benchmarking high-performing systems...	200
Summary.....	205

### **Chapter IX - Conclusion**

Introduction.....	207
Summary of chapters.....	206
Contribution, limitations, and future directions.....	209
End game: Pink clouds and the dream of global governance.....	212

### **List of Tables**

Table 1. Main sample reports.....	26
Table 2. Schema of plot: stages and content (narrative fabric).....	43
Table 3. Overview of analytical framework.....	63
Table 4. Additional background information on main actors/reports featured in the analysis.....	114
Table 5. Summary of moves and strategies.....	115
Table 6. Illustrative overview of themes and policies/practices (sub-stories) in sample reports.....	155
Table 7. Summary of story in foreword of <i>Schools White Paper</i> .....	173

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1. Example information sheet (interviewees).....	216
Appendix 2. Example consent form (interviewees).....	218

<b>Bibliography</b> .....	219
---------------------------	-----

### **List of Acronyms**

ACF.....	Advocacy Coalition Framework
CCSSM.....	Core Curriculum State Standards for Mathematics
CDB.....	Could Do Better
CE.....	Comparative Education
CSFC.....	Children Schools and Families Committee
DfE.....	Department for Education
EU.....	European Union
GEMS.....	Global Education Management Systems
HMI.....	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IAC.....	Intergalactic Audit Commission
IBO.....	International Baccalaureate Organization
IEA.....	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

IMF.....	International Monetary Fund
INCA.....	International Review of Curriculum and Assessment
IOE.....	Institute of Education
IPPR.....	Institute for Public Policy Research
MA.....	Master of Arts
MP.....	Member of Parliament
NFER.....	National Foundation for Educational Research
NESTA.....	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts
NP.....	New Paradigm
NPF.....	Narrative Policy Framework
NPM.....	New Public Management
OECD.....	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofqual.....	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
PIAAC.....	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PIRLS.....	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA.....	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP.....	Private-Public Partnership
QCDA.....	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
RQ.....	Research Question
SER.....	School Effectiveness Research
SESI.....	School Effectiveness and School Improvement
SEU.....	Standards and Effectiveness Unit
SWP.....	Schools White Paper
TAN.....	Transatlantic Advocacy Network
TIMSS.....	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UAE.....	United Arab Emirates
UCL.....	University College London
UK.....	United Kingdom
UN.....	United Nations
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
US.....	United States of America
WB.....	World Bank
WTO.....	World Trade Organisation



## Chapter I. Introduction

### ***The emergence of a ‘new paradigm’***

In 2010, the Conservative-led coalition government published its first white paper in education, *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010). The paper supported its proposals with reference to evidence of ‘what works’ in systems that had performed well on international comparative assessment surveys (e.g. PISA and TIMSS). I was a Masters student at the time, studying Comparative Education (CE), and had recently digested Robin Alexander’s *Culture and Pedagogy* (2000). Having spent several years teaching in Taiwan and Japan, Alexander’s nuanced portrayal of the complex interrelation between education and society resonated with my experience. Classroom discussions further emphasised the need for deep understanding of the context in which education systems are embedded, and the problem of comparing their aims and outcomes on common terms. In his speech at the World Education Forum, Michael Gove<sup>1</sup> (2011a) dismissed such reservations:

No nation that is serious about ensuring its children enjoy an education that equips them to compete fairly with students from other countries can afford to ignore the PISA and McKinsey studies. Doing so would be as foolish as dismissing what control trials tell us in medicine. It means flying in the face of the best evidence we have of what works... Our recently published Schools White Paper was deliberately designed to bring together – indeed, to shamelessly plunder from – policies that have worked in other high-performing nations.

The concept of developing an applied CE, one which might be used to initiate policy transfer, is recognised as one of the field’s most enduring themes. The fancy has surfaced in varying guises, responding to the prevailing intellectual trends, and to the social and political demands of the time. As Cowen (2014) points out, the theme of CE as a ‘useful science’ was already in place with Marc-Antoine Jullien in 1817, ‘and many of the comparative educationists of the 1960s such as C. Arnold Anderson, Edmund King, Brian Holmes and Noah and Eckstein signed up to different versions of an ideology of science’ (291). Although conceptions of CE as a ‘scientific’ or an ‘applied’ discipline have taken a variety of forms, Mattheou (2009) notes they ‘tend to agree on the pragmatic dimensions

---

<sup>1</sup> British Conservative MP, and former Secretary of State for Education, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010-15<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

of the field, on its potential to provide sound advice to policy makers' (63).

Applied forms of CE subscribe to an *engineering model* of research, focusing on the identification of technical solutions to social problems. This is contrasted with the *enlightenment model*, which questions prevailing norms and assumptions, and is not oriented towards directly influencing policy (Hammersley 2002). The latter model is found in the historical and philosophical strands of CE, advocated by Isaac Kandel, Michael Sadler, Nicholas Hans and Robert Ulich. As Kazamias (2009) notes, for this group of scholars, CE was primarily explanatory, and was 'not a predictive or a policy-oriented or a practical/applied social science' (39). Dale (2015) reflects on the contemporary rift between *CE as a producer of expertise*, and *CE as a producer of explanation* (356), which fit the engineering and enlightenment models respectively. Since the 1980s, conceptions of useful knowledge have been strategically redefined in terms of policy relevance (Robertson and Dale 2003), tipping the balance towards *CE as a producer of expertise*.

Whitty (2012) notes that 'much of the evidence produced by politicians in support of so-called "evidence-informed" policy is quasi-research carried out by think tanks and advocacy groups' (361). Ball (1998) traces the origins of this community of 'policy experts' to the 1980s, when 'a group of one-time and would-be sociologists and educational researchers ... took on new identities as "school effectiveness researchers" and "management theorists"' (72). This nascent community of applied scholars and entrepreneurs aligned their research aims with the emerging policy context in England, in which the production and management of data, and the practice of constant comparison was already emerging as a new mode of governance (Ozga 2009). The publication of *Worlds Apart* (Reynolds and Farrell 1996) is generally recognised as a landmark text in England (Alexander 2010), extending the principles of school effectiveness research (SER) to the transnational level.

By 2005, Reynolds was praising the 'practitioners and policy makers, who [had] not been willing to confine either their thinking or their methods to the pattern of existing disciplinary restrictions' (244). He described them as 'pragmatists' (244), embracing a 'new paradigm' (244), one which was being taken up by policy makers around the world as 'axiomatic' (247). Although this 'new paradigm' (hereafter, NP) may have its roots in SER, it has been adopted by a variety of organisations and actors, with disparate backgrounds and agendas, operating in diverse contexts. Ball (2012) observes the increasing

involvement of private consultancies, policy entrepreneurs and 'edu-businesses' in the development and retailing of policies globally, asserting that 'education policy is being "done" in new locations, on different scales, by new actors and organisations' (4).

Grek (2012) identifies 'the emergence of a social matrix of interrelated governing actors, who classify and construct meaning and articulate and diffuse new norms and principles' (43), while Carvalho (2014) argues that 'the monopoly of expertise created around PISA rests on a somewhat narrow social basis that includes a nucleus of between ten and twenty actors (from private & public organisations, experts from different areas, and OECD members)' (63). As these studies imply, the primary source of *CE as a producer of expertise* is not the inner sanctums of the academic departments traditionally devoted to the field. Cowen (2014) highlights the irony, noting the numerous failed attempts to develop an applied CE throughout the field's history, and asserting that finally "we" have an applied comparative education which is not written by "us", and which 'is not even written in our "house"' (293).

Though Carney (2012) reflects that 'the world has moved on, leaving the discipline of comparative education in its wake' (339), it is only a specific form of CE that has been left behind. This thesis explores the story of a field that is perennially in search of an identity, and which appears to have ceded control over its fate. CE (as the NP) is being defined and practiced by organisations and individuals that largely operate outside academic institutions, and its form and *modus operandi* are still not well understood. In a final twist, it is now flowing back through the corridors of academic institutions. Given its rapid rise, and its global influence, in-depth analysis is timely. This thesis represents an initial step towards comprehensive understanding of an emergent phenomenon, taking up Cowen's (2014) challenge of exploring how the field of CE is "changing shape" in response to international and domestic powers.

### ***Thesis aims & guiding questions***

I have highlighted the emergence of a new and influential approach to international comparisons (the NP). The thesis operates on the assumption that the NP *exists*. That is, *there is something out there* that is not well understood and has not yet been subjected to in-depth analysis. The core aims of the inquiry are: (1) to develop understanding of this phenomenon, and the community engaging with it, (2) explore how it has overcome the issues associated with

education transfer, and (3) investigate its influence on education policymaking (in England). The main research aims and questions are elaborated below.

**RQ1.** The original intent was to begin the study with an historical review, tracing the emergence of the NP in England. This initial inquiry merely raised a more fundamental problem, namely: *how do you know it when you see it?* It is quite a task to trace the emergence of a phenomenon that has no fixed state, or even a distinguishing characteristic across its varying incarnations. The task was complicated by the expansive body of international evidence, and the disparate backgrounds, mandates and agendas of the actors and organisations involved in its construction. Kpessa (2012) highlights the lack of understanding of emerging networks, or communities, citing ‘the inability of policy scholars to make a systematic distinction of new actors - a situation compounded by the use of different terminologies to describe similar actors and their activities’ (198).

Terms such as ‘consultocracy’ (Robertson 2012), ‘expertocracy’ (Grek 2013), and ‘the radical advocates of education’ (Valverde 2014) are variously used to describe the community of actors involved in the production and dissemination of education policy solutions. The concept of ‘epistemic communities’ (Haas 1992) is often deployed as a catch-all term (e.g. Kallo 2009), pointing to the existence of some shared principles and beliefs, but without clarifying the precise nature of these characteristics. Though these concepts provide a useful starting point for analysis, they do not offer a systematic definition of the actors concerned (i.e. when/how is one considered a member of the expertocracy?), underlining the sense that the actual characteristics of the NP are not well understood.

Identifying the fundamental characteristics of the NP thus has an instrumental function, serving as a basis for establishing meaningful connections between the actors engaging with the approach to comparisons. As Henry (2011) argues, ‘without theory to drive enquiry into network structure, the modelling becomes *ad-hoc* and difficult to generalize across different policymaking contexts’ (362). The first aims of the inquiry are therefore (1) to illuminate the essential characteristics of the NP, and (2) to thereby develop some conceptual and theoretical links between the community members responding to the demand for education ‘best practices’. The analysis is guided by the question:

*What are the distinctive and inherent characteristics of the ‘new paradigm’?*

**RQ2.** The second main aim touches on a riddle that has been with the field since Michael Sadler (1900) posed the question, “*how far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education?*” The debate generally focuses on the importance of understanding the context in which education systems are embedded, and the disparate cultures and histories that influence their aims and outcomes. These issues are compounded by the complex nature of social systems, and the difficulty in identifying the generalisable causal relationships required to support policy transfer. The thesis does not seek to add to the substantial literature that attempts to clear up the problem of context (e.g. Bray and Thomas 1995; Crossley 2014; Sobe and Kowalczyk 2014), or to answer the question of what can be learned from the study of foreign systems directly. In fact, the recent proliferation of international evidence suggests that the conundrum may finally be put to rest. The answer: we can learn rather a lot.

As Cowen (2014) reflects, Jullien’s vision for a science of CE appears to have been realised. The inquiry therefore focuses on how the NP has overcome the issues associated with education transfer. Analyses of specific reports (e.g. Alexander 2010; Coffield 2012) are illuminating, but are generally lodged from the perspective of CE as *producer of explanation*. Such targeted critiques fail to resonate more widely, as other researchers may always claim to be using a different dataset, a superior method, or assert that they are involved in a different sort of activity altogether. Moreover, these critiques do not provide insight into the NP itself. As Demszky and Nassehi (2014) point out, we still have little insight into how ‘doing knowledge’ actually works (125). Rather than focussing on the *legitimate* nature of comparative inquiry, I therefore explore how international comparisons are *being done*.

Given the influence of the NP on global reform agendas, this is not merely a question of intellectual curiosity. Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) note that ‘expert-discourse plays an important role [in contemporary governance] through the production of concepts, methodologies and tools used to compare educational systems’ (427). The main aim is to unpick this discourse, investigating the concepts, methodologies and tools experts deploy to overcome the core issues, and to develop knowledge of education ‘best practices’. Focusing on the production and management of knowledge in this way might not throw open the ‘black box’ of international assessments and education

governance as Grek (2012) hopes, but at least it may allow us to peek inside. This is pursued through the guiding research question:

*How does the 'new paradigm' overcome the problems associated with the identification and transfer of education 'best practices'?*

**RQ3.** The final aim focuses on the recent review of the National Curriculum in England. The comparative literature often identifies *borrowing* as a symbolic, rather than a substantive process (Rappleye 2012), and describes it as a political strategy (Steiner-Khamsi 2004), one used to derive external legitimacy for preconceived policy agendas (Waldow 2012). Other studies identify cases of coercive transfer, the exertion of soft power and/or inducements (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996), and the role of entrepreneurs and commercial organisations (Ball 2012). While Morris (2012) demonstrated the selective use of evidence in *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE 2010), the review of the National Curriculum is distinctive. For the first time, the review was premised entirely on benchmarking high-performing systems, constructing a framework for learning as part of an evidence-based process.

Criticism levelled during the review tended to focus either on the rationale at a general level, or on the specific lessons drawn, and again emphasised its deviation from the norms of *academic* CE (e.g. Alexander 2011). Having identified the characteristics of the NP, and the strategies used to overcome the issues associated with transfer, the thesis moves to explore how the NP was incorporated into the reform process. This is not a study of what was transferred (or wasn't), or why, or who was involved. Rather, the analysis focuses on how the logic of the NP (1) infused the remit for the review, and (2) influenced the construction of the framework for learning. The main focus falls on how the storyline shapes the form of CE in the policy process, exploring how authority for action was constructed through international comparisons.

The construction of the framework was undertaken by Tim Oates of *Cambridge Assessment*, who chaired the expert panel for the review, and who was on secondment at the DfE throughout the process. To support the portrayal of the review as an evidence-based process, Oates would have to overcome the issues associated with education transfer within the framework. The development and initial application of the framework is thus compared with the analysis in RQ2, serving both as a form of triangulation, and to nuance understanding of

how CE is moulded to suit the interests of policy. By taking analysis to the micro-level, it presents an opportunity for reflection on the impact of the NP on research horizons, at the level of both the individual and the field. These related aspects are approached through the general question:

*How did the new paradigm influence the review of the National Curriculum in England?*

These three questions combine to present a comprehensive overview of the NP. I now turn to provide an overview of the thesis structure.

### ***Thesis structure & development***

The inquiry aims to illuminate the characteristics, *modus operandi*, and influence of a phenomenon that is not well understood. The three main research questions are pursued over a series of stages and levels, and the analysis is informed by theory and analytic tools from a number of disciplines. The exploratory nature of the inquiry prompted a departure from the conventional thesis structure. That is, it does not rely on the traditional chapter signposts, 'literature review' or 'methodology'. The actual content does not depart markedly from common expectations, and the move away from these conventional markers does not represent an arbitrary rebellion. Rather, the shift was taken to provide a more natural format for the reader to engage with the development of the ideas and arguments. To this end, the discussion of literature and methodology is introduced gradually, and integrated into the relevant chapters.

To begin, the NP's explicit policy orientation necessitated a move into political science, and theories on the policy process. The opening review, provided in Chapter II, is devoted to conceptualising the NP, and is guided by the concept of *homo narrans*. The analysis in Chapter III develops a schema of plot structure for understanding the NP at the level of communication and argumentation. This provides a basis for analysing the NP's characteristics at the discursive level, but also opens a fresh body of literature that provokes reflection on the existential properties of the NP, and a search for its deeper origins. Once the preliminary inquiry into its characteristics (RQ1) is complete, the chapters addressing RQ2, and RQ3 are each introduced with a clear statement of the method used, and situated with regard to the preceding theoretical insights.

The interest in the existential aspect of *homo narrans* is explored with regard to the relevance of myths in contemporary culture and politics, drawing on the insights of the philosophy of history and of consciousness. The theories introduced at this stage have a common interest in Husserl's phenomenology, which is concerned with the study of phenomena as they appear in our experience, rather than identifying an objective reality. The perspective is used to explore how the story pushes down on advocates to shape the field, and the two levels of analysis are combined across RQ2 and RQ3. The analysis throughout is connected with the comparative literature where relevant, with the aim of enriching existing perspectives by connecting them with the insights of other fields.

In *The New Science of Politics* (1952), Voegelin opens with strident critique of the destruction wrought by positivism, lamenting the subordination of theoretical relevance to the arbitrary application of method in political science and the humanities. While this charge may serve to flatten the field somewhat, the general point is nonetheless an important one. Voegelin (1952) reflects on a criteria of adequacy:

The question of whether in the concrete case the way was the right one... can be decided only by looking back from the end to the beginning. If the method has brought to essential clarity the dimly seen, then it was adequate; if it has failed to do so, or even if it has brought to essential clarity something in which concretely we were not interested, then it has proved inadequate. (Voegelin 1952, 5-6)

I return to reflect on whether the approach has *brought to essential clarity the dimly seen* at the end of the thesis. At all times, the research was guided by the three core aims that frame the RQs, the nature of the phenomena being studied, and responsiveness to the developments that arose in the course of the analysis. For example, during preliminary investigation into how the NP overcame the issues associated with transfer (RQ2), it emerged that advocates would commonly both accept and reject the issues interfering with the ambition. Merely highlighting this dissonance did not seem adequate, and I began to search for theories and perspectives that might offer a basis for interpreting this trend. This inspired the move to locate the NP within a broader storyline (through political science), and then the search for the deeper origins of the storyline (through the philosophy of history and of consciousness), enabling reflection on the phenomenon across a number of levels.

I here present a brief overview of each of the main chapters, with the exception of the current, introductory chapter (*Chapter I*).

*Chapter II - Conceptualising the NP:* identifies the NP as a comparative genre, and the community promoting it as a discourse community. The chapter asserts the fundamental importance of narratives in human cognition (*homo narrans*), both in communicative acts, and to make sense of existence. Policy is portrayed as a form of storytelling, with evidence gaining its persuasive power as part of a broader narrative about the nature of social reality. The societal storyline that characterises contemporary governance in England is identified as the juxtaposition between the *story of decline*, and the *story of control*, and the *comparative turn* is identified as an extension of this storyline.

*Chapter III - Inside the NP:* uses political science, literary and narrative theory, and discourse analysis to develop a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric. The NP is situated within this broader societal storyline, in which it supports the story of control through the identification of education 'best practices'. This provides a basis for identifying the characteristics of the NP, and developing meaningful links between the disparate actors promoting policy solutions.

*Chapter IV - Analytical framework:* refines the conceptualisation of the community engaging with the NP, identifying them as a discourse coalition, united by the common storyline(s) they use to promote reform. It identifies three broad levels of activity within the coalition, and then introduces the NPF's guidelines for multi-level analysis. These guidelines are used to situate the study, and to clarify connections to the broader literature.

*Chapter V - Characteristics of the NP:* addresses RQ1 directly. The inquiry adopts principles from *genre analysis* to identify the NP's characteristics, focusing on: *rationale*; *assumptions*; and, *underlying ideology*. It then turns to the existential aspect of *homo narrans*, searching for the historical-cultural roots of the storyline. The analysis draws on insights from the philosophy of history and of consciousness, and closes by highlighting the fundamental conflict between the NP's storyline and the nature of social reality.

*Chapter VI - Taming the stream of being:* begins to address RQ2, exploring how the NP overcomes the conflict inherent in its storyline. This process begins with the creation of a calculable world. While this renders society comprehensible, the ambition of education transfer is confounded by the search for generalisable causal knowledge. The chapter demonstrates that advocates express awareness of the issues but nonetheless contrive to subvert reality to deliver the communicative purpose. This peculiar habit is explored with regard to the theoretical perspectives introduced in Chapter IV and V.

*Chapter VII - Science, storytelling & the politics of expertise:* addresses RQ2 directly, developing the analysis in Chapter V to explore how advocates overcome the issues associated with transfer. The schema of plot is combined with principles from move analysis, drawing together the insights of the preceding stages to develop a comprehensive overview of the coalition's *modus operandi*. The chapter identifies how advocates develop *the logic of action*, establish their credentials to provide a platform for advocacy, and how the narrative strategies deployed combine to create a system that is closed conceptually.

*Chapter VIII - Constructing a framework for learning:* addresses RQ3, and begins by laying out the context of the review. The main analysis focuses on the construction and application of a framework for learning. Micro-level analysis enables a more detailed investigation of how the process unfolds, presenting insight into how reality is brought into a conceptual system, and its provisional application to support a straightforward narrative. In this way, it explores how the NP is adapted to support the story of control in the policy process.

*Chapter IX - Conclusion:* retraces the key threads of the argument, reflecting on its limitations, and possibilities for the future. In particular, it raises implications for the field, as academic institutions orient themselves towards the horizons set by the story logic, and the lines between the NP and CE become increasingly murky. This follows a more general discussion about the aspiration of global governance, returning to the storyline's mythic properties and its fundamental contradiction, and raising the question: *what happens when the promised utopia cannot be realised?*

### **Research contribution**

I here outline the main areas of the literature to which the thesis aims to contribute. A full appraisal will only be possible at its conclusion, looking back on the upcoming analysis. The thesis aims to provide insight into how 'best practice' claims are constructed and promoted (i.e. how knowledge is *being done*), demystifying the NP and advancing the potential for critical engagement in intellectual and policy circles. At a basic level, the study therefore contributes to the growing literature focusing on the movement of "global" education policies, education governance, and the actors engaging in these activities (e.g. Ball 2012; Grek 2014; Lingard 2015; Savage 2015; Robertson and Dale 2015). The nature of the inquiry necessitated a move into other fields and disciplines, and the thesis aims to use the insights from these fields to enrich the comparative literature.

The first of these fields is political science, specifically the narrative policy framework (NPF) and post-positivist scholars (e.g. Stone 2012, Fischer 1993, Hajer 1993), which is used to develop the communicative aspect of *homo narrans*. Enders (2010) argues that the emergence of 'new actors' in education policy opens 'new windows of opportunity for a more fruitful relationship between political science and education' (205), and Gupta (2012) promotes the combination of comparative method with theories of the policy process, arguing that 'scholars of both genres would gain a great deal from collaboration' (21). The move towards comparative policy studies has been endorsed by Steiner-Khamsi (2012), and taken up by Lao (2015), who combines Kingdon's (2003) multiple streams theory with Schriewer's and Martinez's (2004) socio-logic, and the advocacy coalition framework's (ACF) policy belief systems (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993).

This thesis draws on the NPF to provide a basis for using narrative to analyse processes of advocacy and transfer, complementing this with other post-positivist scholars in political science (e.g. Stone 2012, Fischer 1993, Hajer 1993). It focuses on the central role of narrative in the policy process, and advocacy more generally, developing a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric, and identifying the beliefs implicit in the NP's storyline. This is used to develop theoretically meaningful links between the disparate actors engaging with the NP, which are defined as a discourse coalition, united by their shared storylines. Though the thesis does not explore the movement of global education policies, or instances of transfer, this theoretical and conceptual work serves as a basis for using narrative to analyse such processes.

The second contribution is based on another level of analysis. Despite grounding their approach in the concept of *homo narrans*, the NPF does not attend to its existential aspect. This thesis addresses the omission. Having laid out a schema of plot, the thesis situates comparative research within this broader societal storyline, in which it is used to support the story of control. Exploring the relevance of myths in contemporary culture, and drawing on insights from the philosophy of history and of consciousness, the thesis explores how the storyline pushes down on researchers (as protagonists) to shape the field. This brings the contribution back to the question of how the NP, and CE more generally, is shaped by global and international powers, searching for a deeper undercurrent to these forces.

The work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, Eric Voegelin, has been influential in this respect, providing a powerful basis for analysing and interpreting the deeper forces that are shaping the field. This relates to Cowen's (2000) emphasis on 'reading the global', which aims 'to offer an interpretation of the political, economic, and historical worlds in which we variously live and in which education takes place' (334). By searching for the deeper origins of the NP, the thesis may in turn provoke reflection on how we interpret and understand phenomenon such as global governance, and the place of CE in this grand storyline. I return to reflect on these issues at the conclusion to the thesis.

## Chapter II.

### Conceptualizing the New Paradigm

#### Introduction

The initial attempt to trace the emergence of the New Paradigm in England was confounded by a fundamental problem, namely: *how do you know it when you see it?* This relates to both identifying the essential characteristics of the approach, and then conceptualising links between disparate members of the community developing and promoting evidence of education 'best practices'. This problem led to the formulation of the first research question:

*What are the inherent and distinctive characteristics of the New Paradigm?*

Approaching the question thematically risked circularity, and the arbitrary exclusion of relevant texts, as such an approach would not provide a theoretical basis for distinguishing essential from arbitrary characteristics. This chapter begins to address the issue. First, it identifies the NP as a comparative genre, which provides a theoretical basis to begin identifying sample reports, with regard to their shared communicative purpose.

Second, given the NP's explicit policy orientation, I situate the genre within the policy process. Specifically, I introduce the central role of narrative in persuasion, and clarify the conceptual overlap between policy, discourse, and narrative. From this, it follows that evidence of education 'best practices' is promoted as part of a broader narrative designed to persuade the listener, or reader, to accept the proposed reforms. Analysis of this narrative may reveal the genre's implicit assumptions and beliefs.

Finally, I identify two key elements of the NP's story arc, the *story of decline* and the *story of control*. I argue that these elements extend beyond specific policy texts, and represent a key feature of the societal storyline under new public management (NPM). I then explore the translation of these elements to the transnational level as part of the *comparative turn*, and argue that the NP has responded to the demand for comparative research to support the story of control, in the form of expert knowledge.

### ***The NP as a comparative genre***

Alexander (2000) provides a point of access for the inquiry, arguing that although advocates of the NP have sought to distance themselves from comparative education, they are still ‘comparativists’<sup>2</sup>. This observation introduces the possibility of treating the NP as a comparative genre.

Genres are ‘the media through which scholars and scientists communicate with their peers’ (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995, 1). Bazerman (2004) describes genres as ‘recognizable, self-reinforcing forms of communication’ (316), that ‘arise in the social processes of people trying to understand each other well enough to coordinate activities and share meanings for their practical purposes’ (317). Kaplan (1993) notes that ‘any community, including a community of scholars, is bound by a circle of conventions’ (171). These conventions are dynamic but relatively stable (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995), and ‘develop in the course of the production and reproduction of communicative practices within a community’ (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 1999, 8).

The community that builds up around a genre’s accepted structures and conventions in turn places constraints on acceptable contributions. Individuals use their knowledge of the genre ‘to create an appropriate rhetorical and conceptual context in which to position their own research and knowledge claims’ (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995, 13), demonstrating the novel content of their work while positioning it within an ‘intertextual web’ (Bazerman 1988). An example of a genre thus involves the ‘successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using conventionalized knowledge of linguistic and discursal resources’ (Bhatia 1993, 16). Shared discourse is essential, allowing members to coordinate their activities according to a set of common rationales, assumptions and principles, and towards a common desirable goal.

The distinction between related genres is not always clear. As Tardy (2011) notes, ‘genres can incorporate antecedent genres explicitly, through references or quotations, or more implicitly as they follow communicative patterns and expectations established through repeated uses’ (58). Related genres may overlap in language, content and/or form, and new genres evolve both through ‘intertextuality and interdiscursivity’ (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 1999, 10).

---

<sup>2</sup> The assertion was specifically targeted at David Reynolds and Shaun Farrell, as a response to the criticism levelled at comparative education in *Worlds Apart* (Reynolds and Farrell 1996), an early and influential example of the NP.

Intertextuality (Bazerman 1988) emphasizes how ‘all acts of communication build on prior texts and text elements’ (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995, 7), whereas interdiscursivity (Fairclough 1992) refers to the manner in which different discourses, or elements of discourses, are combined (or rejected) to form new discourses.

To sustain this definition, it will be necessary to distinguish the NP from other comparative genres. Bhatia (1993) asserts that such a distinction ‘may be based on the communicative purposes’ (23), explaining that ‘the purpose and nature’ of a publication and ‘the nature of the readership’ (20) can explain differences between the content and form of related genres. Communicative purpose(s) has also been held up by other scholars as a useful means for differentiating related genres and as a foundation for analysis of a genre’s characteristics (e.g. Swales 1990; Van Nus 1999; Tardy 2011). As Miller (1984) states, ‘a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred on... the action it is used to accomplish’ (67). It is precisely its policy-oriented ambition that distinguishes the NP from other forms of comparative research. The NP’s communicative purpose can be summarised as follows:

*The identification of education ‘best practices’, or ‘what works’, in high-performing systems.*

Treating the NP as a comparative genre provides a theoretical basis for identifying relevant reports, while tools from genre analysis guide the identification of characteristics (RQ1), and the moves taken to overcome the issues associated with transfer (RQ2). Using this shared communicative purpose I began identifying sample reports, focusing on those published by high profile individuals and/or organisations, and which were (or were likely to be) influential at the level of policy. The search uncovered a diverse array of actors, with various backgrounds and operating in widely disparate contexts, including: international organisations; commercial organisations (consultancies & edubusinesses); charitable and philanthropic organisations; think tanks; entrepreneurs; and, university-based researchers. These reports were variously targeted at the global and local level.

Rather than portraying them as a homogenous community, I attempted to capture the diversity of individuals and organisations engaging with the NP. Table 1. provides an overview of the main authors/organisations and reports represented in the upcoming stages of analysis. In summary:

(1) The NP is a comparative genre; (2) actors engaging with the NP's communicative purpose comprise a discourse community, (3) members of a discourse community do not necessarily agree on all points (e.g. specific policy solutions), and (4) they do not necessarily communicate directly, or actively collaborate with one another.

Given its explicit policy orientation, this definition will be refined in light of a more general discussion on contemporary policymaking, and theories on the policy process.

**Table 1. Main sample reports (analysis featured in Chapter VIII)**

Author/Organisation	Role/Type	Year/Title
OECD	International organisation, committed to the promotion of policies that improve economic and social well-being	<i>2012: Lessons from PISA for Japan, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education</i>
		<i>2013a: Lessons from PISA 2012 for the United States, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education</i>
		<i>2013b: PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)</i>
Andreas Schleicher	Director for the Directorate of Education and Skills (OECD)	<i>2009: "Securing Quality and Equity in Education: Lessons from PISA." Prospects 39: 251-263</i>
		<i>2012: Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century: Lessons from around the World</i>
		<i>2014: Equity, Excellence and Inclusiveness in Education: Policy Lessons from around the World</i>
McKinsey & Company	Global management consultancy	<i>*2007a: How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top</i>
		<i>2007b: Improving Education in the Gulf</i>
		<i>*2010: How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better</i>
		<i>2010: Capturing the Leadership Premium: How the world's Top School Systems are Building Leadership Capacity for the Future</i>
Michael Barber	Chief Education Advisor, Pearson	<i>2009: Impossible and Necessary: Are you Ready for This? London, NESTA.</i>
Institute for Public Policy	Think tank (UK)	<i>2012: Oceans of Innovation: the Atlantic, the Pacific, Global Leadership and the Future of Education</i>
Grattan Institute	Think tank (AUS)	<i>2012: Catching up: Learning from the Best School Systems in East Asia</i>
Global Education Management Systems	Global education consultancy	<i>2015: The Efficiency Index: Which Education Systems Deliver the Best Value for Money?</i>
Reynolds, D. & A. Farrell	Academics (Ofsted report)	<i>*1996: Worlds Apart: a review of international surveys of student achievement involving England</i>
Pearson	Commercial organisation, offering a education solutions & services	<i>2013: Education, Innovation and Israel</i>
Andy Hargreaves	Academic, system change expert	<i>2012: Singapore: the Fourth Way in action?</i>
Tim Oates	Cambridge Assessment	<i>*2010: Could do Better: Using International Comparisons to Refine the National Curriculum</i>
Marc Tucker	President, National Center on Education and the Economy (US)	<i>2011: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: An American Agenda for Education Reform.</i>

\* These reports were analysed during the initial stage of genre analysis, the findings of which are introduced in subsequent chapters, and which are used to provide a platform for the more detailed analysis in Chapter VII of this thesis. The preliminary stage of analysis features in Auld and Morris (2014). The reports featured in this table are not replicated in the bibliography.

### **Perspectives on policy: the *narrative turn***

A discussion of the policy process must begin with a general definition of policy itself. Easton (1953) describes policy as ‘the authoritative allocation of values’, which raises the question of how authority for the selected values is established. The evidence-based movement derives authority from claims that ‘ideological constraints no longer apply, and [policymakers’] consequent enhanced capacity to act on the basis of evidence rather than prejudice’ (Ozga and Jones 2006, 3-4). Interventions are portrayed as objective and scientific, based on the identification of technical solutions, in the form of ‘what works’, and thereby overcoming ideological challenges through the ‘sublimation of politics’ (Fay 1975, 27).

Critics argue that policymakers trust their experience to guide them (Duncan 2009, 453), pursue individual or Party interests (Halpin and Troyna 1995), and ‘deliberately portray [issues] in ways calculated to gain support for their side’ (Stone 1989, 282). While Whitty (2006) acknowledges that policymakers simply have many other considerations to balance when making decisions, Bridges and Smeyers *et al.* (2009) argue that the call for rationally applied evidence is, ‘often and almost always in the context of policy-making, an expedient fiction, a ritual of justification’ (5). This evokes the concept of policy as an argumentative process (Bennet 1997), with scientific insights drawn in by both sides of a debate as part of ‘the politics of expertise’ (Fischer 1993).

The central role of argument and persuasion is comprehensively introduced by Majone (1989), whereby evidence is viewed as ‘information selected from the available stock and introduced at a specific point in an argument’ (48). Rhetoric is understood as the art of persuasion, and it is the responsibility of the listener to develop the skills that allow them to engage critically in an argumentative process (Plett 1985). This rests on a *social-interactive discourse approach*, which ‘takes actors to be actively engaged in choosing and adapting thoughts, shaping and fashioning them, in an ongoing struggle for argumentative triumph over rival positions’ (Fischer 2012, 85). The perspective is captured in Fischer and Forester’s (1993) collected edition, *The Argumentative Turn*, and its sequel, *The Argumentative Turn Revisited* (Fischer and Gottweis 2012).

The focus on argumentation is represented in the comparative literature, in which evidence from high-performing systems is used in a process of symbolic referencing, rather than to initiate substantive transfer (e.g. Rappleye 2012). Successive analyses have demonstrated how ‘international evidence’ is

selectively deployed to support ideological agendas (e.g. Morris 2012; You and Morris 2015), a process that is characterised as a form of externalization (Schriewer and Martinez 2004). Such references are likely to be persuasive only when they reflect public perceptions of what is desirable and attainable (Takayama 2010). The persuasive appeal of an argument often lies, not in the strength of its evidence, or the logic of its argument alone, but the broader story in which it is embedded. As Stone (1988) argues, ‘often what appears as conflict over details is really disagreement about the fundamental story’ (109).

A number of fields have moved towards the study of narrative, a development which is referred to as *the narrative turn* (Herman 2007). At the heart of this shift is the concept of *homo narrans*, which asserts that we have an innate tendency to communicate and to make sense of existence through stories (Bruner 1990). Narratives are portrayed as important to public policy ‘everywhere’ (Roe 1994). As Luke (2011) eloquently reflects, ‘policies—successful and unsuccessful—are ultimately epic poems or stories, with problems to be solved, heroic agents, participants, false starts and dead ends, and with endings, at times happy and at times tragic’ (374). Hajer (1993) goes further, arguing that ‘story lines are the medium through which actors try to impose their view of reality on others, suggest certain social positions and practices, and criticize alternative social arrangements’ (47).

Evidence and arguments gain persuasive power as part of ‘a grand story: a large and loose set of ideas about how society works, why it goes wrong and how it can be set right’ (Cohen and Garet 1991, 125). Processes of externalization, characterised by symbolic references to high-performing systems, only resonate in as far as the broader storyline gives these symbols meaning. Dryzek (1993) identifies the role of argument and narrative in science, in which scientists are required to ‘storify’ their findings (Cobley 2014), while Fischer (2012) points out that “‘facts’... are embedded—explicitly or implicitly—in narrative accounts’ (169). As Kaplan (1986) explains, ‘only a narrative can explain which particular course of action is desirable and why’ (761), and such “objective” narrative accounts are considered to have the most powerful influence on listeners (Labov 1997).

The increased attention to narratives in policymaking is attributed, in part, to developments in modern communication, particularly the influence of the internet, social media, and twenty-four hour news channels. In this context, ‘the reach of narratives is far and the dissemination near instantaneous’ (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 225), and ‘there are fewer editorial obstacles found than in traditional

media' (Shanahan et al. 2011, 536). Fairclough (2000) refers to this as the 'mediatizing' of politics and policy, and Fischer (2012) argues that 'politicians and the media... have turned contemporary politics into a political spectacle that is experienced more like a stage drama than reality itself', and which is 'based on socially constructed stories designed more to capture the interest of the audience than to offer factual portrayal of events' (58). In the comparative literature, this *theatrical turn* is alluded to by Rappleye (2012), who refers to the 'scripting' and 'staging' of reform agendas.

While the significance of narrative is recognised in the comparative literature, it is rarely taken beyond the level of provocative metaphor, and is often used to undermine the "truth" of a given account. Describing policy as story is not here intended as pejorative, for it is simply the most effective and natural mode for communicating our beliefs and desires. Rather, the perspective is emphasised due to its potential to provide fresh insight into the phenomenon in question.

### **Policy, discourse, and narrative: *three sides of the same coin?***

By viewing policy as narrative, it is possible to position the NP's communicative purpose within a broader storyline. Before proceeding to explore the nature of this storyline, it is necessary to clarify the conceptual connections between *policy*, *discourse* and *narrative*. The preceding section defined policy as the authoritative allocation of values. As Buchstein and Jorke (2012) argue, 'liberal regimes do not, or only in exceptional cases, coerce', and instead they 'try to lead behaviour and thoughts of... individuals through incentive structures, through the creation of likelihoods and possibilities' (290). Edelman (1988) was one of the first scholars to introduce the concept of policy as discourse, acknowledging his debt to Foucault. Ball (1990) subsequently explores the concept of policy as discourse under Thatcher in the UK, noting 'the way in which... emergent discourses were constructed to define the field, articulate the positions and thus subtly set limits to the possibilities of education policy' (23).

Scholars argue that it is improper to search for a 'correct' definition of discourse, with Bacchi (2000) pointing out that 'the whole idea of discourse is that definitions play an important part in delineating "knowledge"', and therefore 'require scrutiny rather than replication' (46). It is nonetheless necessary to offer a working definition for the current study, focusing on its overlap with narrative and policy. Discourse is here understood broadly as 'the social activity of making meanings with language and other symbolic systems' (Lemke 1995, 6). It is 'an

assemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena' (Hajer 1993, 45). Fischer (2012) highlights the overlap between the concepts of discourse and narration (161), by which narrative discourse is a specific type of discourse, 'consist[ing] of a connected sequence of narrative statements' (Chatman 1978, 31). These narrative sequences inevitably include a series of events with causal and temporal ordering (Todorov 1990), in which the sequence described is rationally connected (van Dijk 1976).

Viewing policy in this way suggests that 'problems' are not somewhere 'out there' in the world, but are shaped and constructed to demonstrate the inevitability of the prescribed 'responses'. The process involves the intentional and strategic attempt by groups of people to create a shared understanding of the world that can in turn legitimate and motivate collective action (McAdam, McCarthy et al. 1996). It is instrumental 'and fosters common perceptions and understandings for specific purposes' (Howarth 2000, 3). In this way, it is coloured by and productive of ideology (Locke 2004), where ideology is understood at a basic level as 'a coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs' (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 8). Such beliefs are not arbitrary, but rather form 'the foundation of the shared representation of social groups', and involve specific norms and values, which are 'typically the basis of social attitudes' (van Dijk 2004, 6).

Narrative may therefore be understood as 'part of the general process of *representation* which takes place in human discourse' (Cobley 2014, 3). The thesis focuses on discourse in its narrative form, and explores how it is strategically developed and promoted to shape beliefs and social attitudes. If the propositions or events within a narrative can be rationally connected then the discourse is described as having a macrostructure (van Dijk 1976). The nature and content of such macrostructures can be used to identify the critical aspects of a community's discourse and underlying beliefs/ideology, a point which will be explored by developing a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric. Clarifying the conceptual overlap between policy, discourse, and narrative in this thesis creates a chance to develop the conceptualization of the NP, focusing on the key aspects of the story arc in which the genre is embedded.

### **Deconstructing the Story**

I have defined the NP as a comparative genre, identified by its distinctive communicative purpose. Moreover, I have identified the central role of narrative

in policymaking, arguing that evidence of education ‘best practices’ is deployed as part of a broader narrative about society, what is wrong, and what needs fixing. Having clarified the conceptual overlap between policy, discourse, and narrative, it follows that the community’s shared discourse may be organised into and explored in its narrative form. Moreover, analysis of the genre’s characteristics may be approached through exploration of this narrative.

This section identifies two key elements of the story arc: (i) the *story of decline*, and (ii) the *story of control* (Stone 1988; 2012). Rather than being confined to specific policy texts, these elements are identified at the societal level in the context of new public management (NPM). The final section highlights (iii) the *comparative turn*, and the translation of these two key story elements to the transnational level. In the context of this storyline, comparative research is required to support the story of control, in the form of expert knowledge.

***(i) Governing by numbers and the story of decline***

Stone (1988) identifies one of the most prevalent policy storylines as the ‘story of decline’, stating: ‘the story of decline almost always begins with a recitation of facts or figures purporting to show that things have gotten worse... What gives this story dramatic tension is the assumption, sometimes stated and sometimes implicit, that things were once better than they are now, and that the change for the worse causes or will soon cause suffering’ (110). It is important to note that the story is not confined to specific reform proposals, but that the need to improve standards becomes a *societal storyline* under neoliberal modes of governance, and specifically, new public management (NPM).

NPM was rolled out by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the 1980s, and Verger and Curran (2014) note how institutions such as the World Bank and IMF have been ‘disseminate[ing] NPM ideas across the developing world’. The approach to governance is premised on cutting bureaucracy and improving efficiency through the introduction of market mechanisms to the provision of public services. The approach is characterised by Rose (1991) as ‘governing by numbers’ and, as Stone observes, ‘[numbers] are the premier language for stories of decline and decay’ (133). As Ball (1995) points out, this process ‘both constructs a normative model of the effective school and abnormalises the ineffective or ‘sick’ school’ (261).

While there must always be failing schools, the storyline primarily emphasises the need for *improvement* on the selected measurements. Such a national drive

to improve standards may draw on the perceived implications for economic competitiveness, but a major theme lies with the compromised life chances of students in schools judged to be underperforming. The wide attainment gap between socio-economic (or ethnic/ gender) groups is thus viewed as a failing of the specific schools, or communities, rather than as a reflection of broader societal faults, or inequalities (Exley and Ball 2011). Focusing blame within schools in this way implies that the underperformance is a technical issue, amenable to human control, and therefore can be fixed subject to the identification of the appropriate solution (i.e. 'what works', or 'best practice').

This brings us to the second key aspect of the story arc, *the story of control*.

### ***(ii) Expert knowledge and the story of control***

Stone (1988) highlights another common story, the 'story of control', summarised as follows: 'The situation is bad. We have always believed that the situation was out of our control, something we had to accept but could not influence. Now, however, let me show you that in fact we can control things'. In short, 'what had formerly appeared to be "accidental", "random", "a twist of fate", or "natural" is now alleged to be amenable to human agency' (113). As Stone states, such stories are compelling as 'they speak to the fundamental problem of liberty-to what extent do we control our own life conditions and destinies?' (113). This 'technological conception' underlies the concept of evidence-based policymaking, whereby authority for action rests on the production of expert knowledge of 'what works' (Rizvi 2007).

Lemke (1995) describes the 'what works' rhetoric as a form of 'technocratic discourse', by which 'the technocratic elite claims a right to rule on the grounds of its ability to use expert knowledge to solve social problems' (70). As Morris (2012) points out, appeals to history and ideology 'are ultimately derived from highly subjective personal belief systems, are potentially divisive and provide their proponents with no relative advantage to those who hold a contrary viewpoint' (90). To this end, 'authority is given to experts who, being above the sphere of politics and competition, are supposed to be able to define the "practicable" course of action' (Hajer 1993, 49). Social science emerges as principal supplier of the necessary intellectual ammunition (Fischer 1993), and fields that are not traditionally "scientific" are pressured to approximate the language and conventions of the natural sciences (Hyslop-Margison and Naseem 2007).

The overall storyline of NPM is therefore characterised by the juxtaposition of the story of decline with the story of control. While the story of decline may be recast in more general terms as the need to improve, the control element is supported by guiding research towards the identification of technical solutions, typified by the demand for ‘what works’, or ‘best practices’. It is important to note that this moves us beyond a policy story designed merely to justify specific interventions and into a broader *societal storyline*. In this respect, expert knowledge is necessary to provide authority for action, and fields such as school effectiveness research (SER) were developed in response to this demand for *useful* knowledge.

### ***(iii) From governing by numbers to the comparative turn***

The introductory chapter highlighted the translation of the principles of SER to the transnational level, identifying *Worlds Apart* (1996) as a watershed text in the UK. Similar reports were developed in the US during the 1980s, with *A Nation at Risk* being the most prominent example. Though the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) had been publishing comparative surveys since the 1960s, the calls for an improved set of indicators emerged more powerfully among OECD members in the 1980s, and particularly from the US (Papadopoulos 1994). These calls reflected the emergence of a new grand narrative, emphasising the ‘centrality of education in the knowledge society and the role of education for the innovation capacities of a country or region in global competition’ (Enders 2010, 209).

While the IEA responded by developing the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has arguably done most to capture the public and political imagination. This is often attributed to the OECD’s marketing rather than the validity of the test itself (Grek 2009). Since its release in 2000, has grown in scope and influence with each cycle, hailed by the BBC as ‘the world cup of school standards’<sup>3</sup>. The central role of comparative data is captured by Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003), who trace CE through a series of historical phases, exploring how it has changed shape in response to the demands of the given

---

<sup>3</sup> Coughlan, S. (2013). How PISA became the world’s most important exam, in *BBC* online, 27.11.2013. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24988343> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).

period, and identifying the current phase as ‘measuring the other’, a trend which they argue culminates in ‘comparison as a mode of governance’:

This idea continues to inspire a rich seam in the comparative literature (e.g. Grek 2009, Meyer and Benavot 2013; Fenwick, Mangez et al 2014). Martens (2007) terms this the ‘comparative turn’, focusing specifically on how the OECD has used these standardised criteria to compare member states, to extend its influence, and to exert pressure for reform through a process of normalisation. In this context, the story of decline is developed relative to other systems, rather than other schools in a given domestic setting. Moreover, Kamens (2013) points out that ‘once [international] benchmarks are accepted as “valid”, the identification and transfer of ‘best practices’ naturally follows’ (124).

Sanderson (2002) claims that the growing scrutiny cast on public interventions from both the social and economic spheres results in a search for new sources of legitimacy. Meanwhile, Takayama (2010) claims that when such legitimacy can no longer be found in ‘traditional symbols and languages’ (57) a society’s ‘internal reference system is no longer valid’ (57). In this way, external sources can serve as a ‘coalition-builder’, where the external authority is invoked to help introduce reforms that would otherwise have been resisted (Steiner-Khamsi 2004, 203). Waldow (2012) identifies such referencing as a process of externalization, one which draws legitimacy from the ‘world situation’ and ‘the principles and results of science’, dovetailing with concerns over global competitiveness and the move towards technocratic modes of governance.

This effectively moves comparative education central to the story, shifting the focus from *school* effectiveness to *system* effectiveness research, and nurturing the rise of the NP. The thesis is primarily concerned with the community of international experts that engages with the demand for knowledge, and how such knowledge is developed, rather than how it is deployed by policymakers to support reform. Whether or not the evidence is used to initiate substantive transfer, or merely to legitimise existing agendas, the community of advocates must nonetheless demonstrate the robust, scientific nature of claims, harnessing comparisons to support the story of control.

### **Summary**

The NP has been defined as a comparative genre, identified by its distinctive communicative purpose. Actors engaging with this communicative purpose form a discourse community, though they do not necessarily interact, or agree on all

points, or even hold similar policy preferences. I identified the central role of narrative in the policy process, and in advocacy more generally, moving beyond the causal sequencing in specific policy texts to the concept of a societal storyline. Having laid out the conceptual overlap between policy, discourse and narrative, I situated comparative research within the storyline that characterises contemporary governance in England.

Specifically, I argued that evidence of 'what works' is necessary to sustain the story of control, and to provide authority for action. Impetus for reform is provided through the introduction of systems of performance management, developing the story of decline. These two basic story elements were identified at the transnational level, with the NP supporting the story of control as part of the comparative turn. Chapter III will nuance the decline-control storyline at the international level, mapping a preliminary schema of plot structure and narrative fabric that policymakers and advocates draw on to promote reforms.

## Chapter III

### Inside the NP: Narrative structure and elements

#### Introduction

Fischer (2012) argues that, 'beyond seeking to explain a "given reality", social science must attempt to explain how social groups construct their own understandings of that reality' (134-135). This can be pursued through the medium of stories, and in particular, the concept of *plot*. This chapter develops the basic decline-control storyline outlined in Chapter II into a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric, which policymakers and advocates tailor to promote reform.

I begin by introducing the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), which provides a useful guide for inquiry, but which diverges from the main aims of this thesis. Specifically, the NPF does not operationalize the concept of plot. To address this shortcoming, I draw on other strands of political science, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and literary theory, as well as relevant comparative literature. I close by clarifying the applications of the schema, and by laying out some criteria for narrative "quality".

#### ***The Narrative Policy Framework***

The NPF is a recent development in political science, appearing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Theories of the Policy Process* (Sabatier and Weible 2014), and recently publishing its first collected work detailing applications of the framework to date, titled *The Science of Stories* (Jones, Shanahan et al. 2014). The framework was developed 'as a quantitative, structuralist, and positivist approach to the study of policy narratives' (Jones and McBeth 2010, 331). NPF scholars aimed to attain recognition within the broader political science literature by responding to Sabatier's (2000) criticism that post-positivist approaches that dominated analysis of policy narratives failed to meet 'scientific standards', lacking clear concepts, and testable hypotheses, and had therefore failed in the fundamental task of being 'clear enough to be wrong'. McBeth, Jones et al. (2014) note that, for the NPF to be classified as a framework, it must specify its model of the individual.

This begins with the central importance of *narrative cognition*, which is based on the concept of *homo narrans*:

1. Narrative is the primary means by which human beings make sense of and

situate themselves within the world; in this way, it renders human existence meaningful. It is posited that narrative serves as the primary communication device within and across groups and networks, and; that narrative also serves as a preferred means for organizing thoughts, memories, affect, and other cognitions at the level of the individual. Thus, narrative is the preferred heuristic employed by all for the purpose of making sense of the world. (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 233)

This concept of narrative cognition is developed using a range of disciplines, including psychology, political science, law, and the interdisciplinary study of narrative. The relevant assumptions are laid out below, closely paraphrased from McBeth, Jones et al. (2014, 231-233).

2. *Bounded rationality*: individuals make decisions under conditions of limited time and limited information. Under such conditions, individuals “satisfice,” or more simply, settle for an acceptable alternative.

3. *Heuristics*: given bounded rationality, individuals rely on information shortcuts to process information and facilitate decision-making. These heuristics are many, but they are rooted in phenomena such as what information is available at the time, past experience, expertise and training, and biological biases.

4. *Confirmation and disconfirmation bias*: individuals engage in confirmation bias whereby they treat congruent evidence that agrees with their priors (beliefs, knowledge, etc.) as stronger than incongruent evidence... and process congruent stimuli quicker than incongruent stimuli; likewise, individuals also engage in disconfirmation bias whereby evidence that is incongruent with priors is counter argued and takes longer to process than congruent evidence.

5. *Selective exposure*: individuals select sources and information that are congruent with what they already believe.

6. *Identity-protective cognition*: selective exposure, confirmation bias, and disconfirmation bias are conditioned by knowledge and prior beliefs and used by individuals in a way that protects their prior identity, or who they already understand themselves to be. Those with the strongest prior attitudes, especially those with higher levels of knowledge and political sophistication, employ what they know to protect their priors.

7. *Primacy of groups and networks*: the social, professional, familial, and cultural networks and groups in which individuals find themselves immersed play a vital role in helping individuals assign affect to social and political objects. In short, people look to their trusted relationships and associations to help them make sense of the world.

These assumptions have direct parallels with those laid out by the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), with which the NPF is aligned, and to which I will return in Chapter IV. Using this ‘model of the individual’, the NPF ‘makes the empirically testable conjecture that narrative likely plays an important role in public policy outcomes, processes, and designs’ (McBeth, Jones et al 2014, 233).

The NPF ‘applies an objective epistemology (i.e. science) to a subjective ontology (social reality)’, working on the premise that ‘narrative truths are socially

constructed and that these policy realities may be systematically and empirically studied' (Jones, Shanahan et al 2014, 3). It 'relies on traditional social science techniques and methods to measure socially constructed realities' (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 249), and is presented as a hybrid platform of post-positivist theory and rationalist methods. NPF scholars aim to 'better understand how policy narratives contain beliefs, mobilize citizens, strategically deploy scientific information in the pursuit of policy positions, and influence public opinion' (Shanahan et al. 2011, 540). While this thesis does not share the same 'scientific' aspirations as NPF, it recognises the value of its systematic appraisal and presentation of the post-positivist theory that underpins its empirical application, and the rigour and clarity with which the framework develops and states its core concepts and assumptions.

NPF has embraced qualitative applications of the framework, with Shanahan, McBeth, et al. (2014, 254) claiming that due to its 'post-positivist roots, nourished by interpretive research and qualitative methodologies... the NPF's theoretical connection to such methodologies is very much built into the framework' (254). It provides a 'shared research platform' (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt et al. 2014, 188), serving to 'specify assumptions, identify scope, establish general categories and definitions of concepts and variables and provide a shared language for scholars' (Schlager and Weible 2013, 390). This thesis draws on the NPF's guidelines for multi-level analysis, and its account of narrative elements, developing and operationalizing the concept of plot with reference to a broader range of literature. It also shares the NPF's interest in the beliefs embedded in narratives, and the strategies that individuals use to protect those beliefs, an interest which the NPF explores through the ACF.

I will return to discuss the ACF, and the beliefs embedded in the coalition's narrative, in Chapter IV, but now focus on narrative form and elements, and in particular, the concept of plot.

### ***Narrative form and elements***

Mandler (1984) argues that, in spite of the variety in content, 'stories have an underlying, or base, structure that remains relatively invariant... [and which] consists of a number of ordered constituents' (22). Similarly, Robinson and Hawpe (1986) suggest that while 'no single structural definition can account for the wide range of compositions people accept as stories', there may nonetheless be a 'prototype', and that variants will likely 'share *some* of the prototype's

characteristics/elements' (112 italics added). The NPF assumes the existence of generalizable structural elements that can be identified in multiple narrative contexts. The NPF identifies four core narrative elements: setting; characters; plot; and, moral (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 228), arguing that these 'narrative elements are the distinctively narrative structures of a story that separate narrative from other message structures such as lists, chronologies, frames, discourses, or memes' (Jones, McBeth et al. 2014, 5).

Scholars emphasise the central role of plot in connecting narrative elements, providing 'the arc of the action' (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 228). As Ricouer (1984) argues, the plot "grasps together" and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole' (x). Shanahan, Jones et al. (2011) claim that policy narratives *must* have a plot, and that such 'plots serve to link the characters to settings, assign the roles of the characters, and, most importantly, assign blame through some assertion of causation' (540). In this way, the plot 'creates a policy reality that both defines the problem and the reasons the problem exists in the first place, which most certainly walks the solution in a particular direction (i.e. the moral)' (Shanahan, Adams et al. 2014, 72). Ochs (2011) describes plot as 'a theory of events', which 'knits together circumstantial elements... into a coherent scheme that revolves around an exceptional, usually troubling, event' (71).

I introduce the other narrative elements highlighted by NPF when developing the schema of plot, namely: *setting*; *characters*; and, *moral*. Though texts do not necessarily contain *all* of the elements highlighted as important, NPF argues that they utilise some combination of the above. As Scholes et al. (1966) observe:

On the whole... of all aspects of narrative, plot seems not only to be the most essential but also the least variable, insofar as its general outlines are concerned. We demand variety of incident more than we demand variety of plot in our fiction... We know our destination though we do not know specifically what scenes we shall pass on the way. (238)

This notion that plots follow common patterns opens up the search for archetypal plots, to which I will return in Chapter V.

### ***The Point of Departure: artistic differences with the NPF***

Although Jones, McBeth et al. (2014, 6) acknowledge the central role of plots in connecting the other narrative elements to form a coherent story, they state that the NPF does not endorse a specific operationalization of plot due to the 'myriad

ways' in which it performs this function. Weible and Schlager (2014) also note the central role of plots in narratives, and the analytic value they possess, but then assert that any such typologies 'might not be fitting for the NPF and its empirical applications' (242). This rigidity stems from NPF scholars' desire to gain recognition within the US political science community. This strict adherence to the prescribed method represents a key point of departure from the NPF.

While the NPF does not explicitly rule out the possibility of developing a schema of plot for the investigation of specific policy issues, or coalitions, it retains a narrow focus on the influence of narrative elements on policy outcomes, relying on hypothesis testing, corpus analysis and quantifiable measurements that can be presented as (generalizable) empirical "facts". The NPF's interest in plot would largely be constricted to identifying the story elements, quantifying the occurrence of those elements, and tracing patterns of usage in an attempt to relate them to policy outcomes. In contrast, this thesis uses plot as a gateway to the deeper characteristics of the community's narrative, and to explore the form and development of comparative research within that narrative.

### ***Using narrative to access discourse***

Chapter II clarified the conceptual connections between policy, discourse, and narrative. The concept of using narrative macrostructures in discourse analysis has been discussed by van Dijk (1980), who describes the analysis of narrative and discourse as 'an area of research ripe for inter-disciplinary collaboration' (2). Macrostructures underlie our ability to summarize stories, and inherent in these summaries are the key aspects of the discourse which convey the 'point' of a story (Rumelhart 1975). These cannot be adequately captured at the micro-level with regard to sentence structures or linguistic nuances alone (van Dijk 1976, 547) and any attempt to use narrative for this purpose must therefore account for macrostructure and plot design (Chatman 1978, 84).

Policy stories develop a discourse which 'portray[s] particular policies as made inevitable by the way the world is now' (Fairclough 2003, 99), and to be effective 'persuasion must be accomplished rhetorically' (Reissman 2008, 77). This relates directly to plots, as the development of a plot 'is a process of narrowing possibility. The choices become more and more limited, and the final choice seems not a choice at all, but an inevitability' (Chatman 1978, 46). Analysis focusing on narrative structure can identify how this sense of inevitability is manufactured. Moreover, it is 'able to investigate, not just how stories are

structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means, the mechanisms by which they are consumed, and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted' (Squire 2008, 5).

Two important points must be emphasized. First, narrative can be used to access and analyse key aspects of a community's shared discourse. And, second, the focus on narrative macrostructure provides a relevant framework for accessing and analysing this discourse, and the strategies used to promote it. Narrative strategies are understood as 'the tactical portrayal and use of narrative elements to manipulate or otherwise control policy-related processes, involvement, and outcomes' (Jones, McBeth et al. 2014, 9). The remainder of this chapter focuses on operationalizing the concept of plot, and identifying key narrative elements.

### ***Operationalizing plot: Aims and approach***

There has been historical interest in developing a rule system for narratives, or a theory of the syntax of narrative structure (e.g. Forster 1927; Lakoff 1972). 'Notions such as 'plot', 'schema', and 'plan' have been used, both in classic literary scholarship and in structural analysis of myths, folktales and other simple stories, in order to denote more global narrative structures' (van Dijk 1976, 547). Roe (1994) provides a useful introduction to narrative in policy, promoting an emphasis on the policy story and metanarratives, but without delineating any framework to guide analysis. The concept of plot corresponds with the emphasis on structure and staging found in discourse analysis more generally.

Fairclough (2003) argues that 'analysis of generic structure is of value for more strategic, purpose-driven texts', highlighting a 'need to look for staging in analyzing texts and interactions' while warning that we shouldn't expect 'to always find that they are organized in terms of a clear generic structure' (74). The concept of plot complements this focus, and the NP is clearly a purpose-driven genre. As Squire (2008) has noted, 'the search for a valid interpretive frame is perhaps the research stage that causes most controversy and concern' (33) and the approach to analysis 'depends once more on researchers' idea of what 'narrative' is' (34). This section develops a framework for analysing the NP's storyline, a narrative discourse in which the sequence of events is causally, temporally and rationally connected.

Aristotle offered the platitude that a story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, a point which is elaborated by Fischer (2003) in the context of policymaking:

The beginning of the story is about a problem situation to be solved by a policymaker, the middle action or event introduces a policy intervention, and the end turns to the consequences of a policy outcome. (168)

The schema presented below develops and nuances this basic structure. The foundations of the framework were inspired by political science, narrative and discourse analysis, and literary theory. The overview also draws on comparative literature that focuses on the broader context in which the NP has emerged. An analysis of the reports published by members of the community engaging with the NP and policy texts was used to develop and refine the schema, and this analysis is introduced in Chapter VII to avoid repetition. The resulting schema is featured in Table 2, and the stages are elaborated below. Each stage is summarised at two levels, with regard to *generic content* and *specific content*. The generic content identifies basic story components that might be identified in other storylines. The specific content, which details the broad narrative fabric used to promote versions of the NP's storyline, will be developed and nuanced in light of the main section of analysis.

**Table 2. Schema of plot structure and narrative Fabric**

Stages		Function and narrative elements	Narrative fabric (coalition-specific)
Act 1	(i) Imagined ordinary	1. Establishing the frame (i) Context/setting (ii) Change in condition (bygone era)	<i>1. References to: (a) an emerging, hyper-competitive global knowledge economy, and/or a global meritocracy; and (b) education's economic function is stressed (human capital)</i>  <i>Effect: constructed paranoia; status quo no longer an option</i>
	(ii) "The call"	1. Specific event: e.g. PISA; financial crisis; natural disaster 2. Implications (real/imagined; present/projected) (a) Crisis/indifference 3. Alt: Long-standing problem Victims: population or group	<i>1. Performance relative to other systems on international surveys is highlighted</i> <i>2. Evaluation:</i> <i>(a) crisis/ stagnation/need to stay ahead (will to quality)</i> <i>(b) improve equity, or efficiency</i> <i>(c) necessity of education reform</i>
Act 2	(iii) Diagnosis	1. Identify (a) cause of problem  (b) villains: malicious/benign/self-harming	<i>1. A specific aspect of the education system is blamed, or highlighted for improvement/'optimisation'</i>  <i>2. An individual or group is blamed for the situation - Blame may be direct, or implicit (e.g. point of contrast)</i>
	(iv) Prescription	1. Identify solution: relates to designation of blame  2. Mode of justification (e.g. evidence; ideology; intuition)  3. Fixer: e.g. government, external authority	<i>1. A prescription is found for the diagnosis</i>  <i>2. Evidence of 'what works'/'best practices' in high-performing systems: generic, or specific system(s); "global" education policy</i>  <i>3. non-specific</i>
Act 3	(v) Fortunate/fatal future	(a) What might, could or should be  (i) Utopia/dystopia (ii) Fragments of utopias (iii) Abstract visions  Return to a bygone era, or adjustment to conditions of 'new' imagined ordinary	<i>References to:</i> <i>1. World class education system(s)</i> <i>a) High performance</i> <i>b) Low attainment spread</i> <i>2. Economic competitiveness (national)</i> <i>3. Empowered knowledge workers (individual)</i> <i>a) raising lowest performers</i> <i>b) raising the bar for "brightest" pupils</i>

## **Overview of narrative stages and content**

Below I elaborate on the stages identified in the Table 2 (above).

### **Act I**

#### **1. The imagined ordinary**

Booker (2004) describes how stories most often begin by introducing the protagonists in the context of their ordinary world. Similarly, Fairclough (2005) notes that ‘discourses include representations of how things are and have been, as well as imaginaries – representations of how things might or could or should be’ (81). Rather than capturing an objective reality, this *setting* represents the narrators interpretation, or strategic portrayal, of the macro-level context, or ‘world state’ (Abell 2004), in which they ‘construct plausible albeit selective accounts of what is and what they believe ought to be going on’ (Ney 2014, 210). This reflects Schon’s (1979) claim that ‘each story constructs its view of social reality through a complementary process of naming and framing’ (264).

Though Goffman (1974) introduced the concept of the ‘frame’ as ‘a principle of organization, ‘which governs the subjective meaning we assign to social events’ (10-11), the process of *strategic* framing is often identified as the key stage in the policy process (Sabatier 1998), determining what conditions may be considered as problems that require attention, privileging specific values and objectives, and setting the story on the desired trajectory. Hall (2009) claims that ‘the most important role of indicator sets may be in framing the issues and defining the problems, rather than suggesting the solutions’. In literary and narrative theory, the ordinary world is a stable and safe environment, and is disrupted by ‘the call’, or ‘complicating action’ (stage two). In contrast, the NP thrusts the protagonists into a world that is inherently unstable, characterised by the struggle for global supremacy (Alexander 2012).

Just as stories are constructed through frames, so these ‘frames... can be uncovered through the analysis of the stories the various participants are disposed to tell about policy situations’ (Fischer 2012, 145). The NP draws its content from what Lingard and Rizvi (2010) refer to as the ‘neoliberal imaginary’, and is supported by the following assumptions: (1) education’s primary function is to prepare individuals/nations to compete in the global knowledge economy; (2) outcomes measured by international surveys (i.e. PISA) provide a reliable proxy for the quality of a system’s human capital; (3) reform must therefore focus on

improving outcomes on international surveys; (4) this requires the identification of 'what works'/'best practices' in 'high-performing' systems.

While this setting relates to the physical, social and temporal context of the protagonists' conduct, Ochs (2011) points out that 'literary analyses of stories and cultural psychological approaches emphasize that setting goes beyond time and space and social circumstance to encompass *the psychological climate that anticipates a beginning narrative event*' (74, italics added). The full significance of this will emerge below, in the form of constructed paranoia.

## **2. The call: inciting incident and crisis rhetoric**

Van Dijk (1976) asserts that 'given some initial state, an action or event must take place which is unexpected, surprising or dangerous for the persons involved in the course of events' (554). This stage can be divided into two related aspects. The first aspect, the *inciting incident*, is the event that disrupts the imagined ordinary, and has parallels in Labov's (1967) 'complicating action'. The second aspect, identifies the specific undesirable consequences of the inciting incident, sharpening the crisis, and has parallels in Labov's 'evaluative clause', in which the storyteller steps back to comment on meaning. Stone (1988) notes that, through the process of setting the frame, 'the author has established a bygone era of well-being and placed us, the audience, on the precipice of decline' (112). This rests on the establishing that the identified change for the worse will soon cause some additional suffering. For example, a drop in educational standards will result in economic decline. Campbell (1949) identifies this as 'the call', spurring the hero into action.

Ball (2012) remarks that 'there is nothing so productive for change as a good crisis and its attendant "moral panics"' (14), and Naomi Klein (2007) identifies how organisations in the U.S. capitalise on disasters to push through processes of privatisation that would otherwise have been resisted, a strategy she refers to as 'disaster capitalism'. Policymakers need not wait for such cataclysms, however, for as Ball (2007) points out, in this 'imagined economy', education is 'in almost permanent crisis' (5). Whereas the 'PISA shock' is often cited as an external catalyst for change (Steiner-Khamsi 2004), policymakers and advocates routinely assert that the nation must do better and that it is falling behind international competitors (Gorard 2001). As Levin (1998) observes, 'the need for change in education is largely cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of the workforce and competition with other countries' (131).

To provide impetus for reform, the perceived decline must capture the 'national mood', a critical factor in the successful mobilization of reform agendas (Stone 1989). Reports targeting a specific context (e.g. nation/province) highlight the system's performance relative to its competitors to develop variations of the story of decline. The paranoia engendered by the story of unforgiving global competition ensures that policymakers need not rely on a specific results to provide impetus for reform, but merely cite the need to keep improving outcomes relative to competitors. This draws a key point for reflection, for whereas *the call* is usually preceded by an abrupt, or unpredictable inciting incident, in this case the ordinary world has been recast as one in which the beast is always lurking just beyond the city walls.

## **Act II.**

### **3. The designation of blame (i.e. diagnosis)**

This stage is concerned with how blame is designated for the perceived crisis, and how the dominant group thereby establishes its authority to intervene with corrective measures. This is closely bound up with the path to resolution, as blame is generally allocated to legitimize the focus of the desired policy 'solution' (Lemke 1995). Causal mechanisms are deployed to identify who or what is to blame for the identified problem (Labov 2002; Stone 2012). As Takayama (2010) notes, 'every crisis story line is premised on a simplified cause-effect relationship, structured around a familiar narrative pattern with villains who caused the crisis and heroes who will save us from crisis' (59). McBeth, Jones et al. (2014) claim that, 'as in any good story, there may be victims who are harmed, villains who do the harm, and heroes who provide or promise relief from the harm and a solution to the problem' (228). The two aspects to this stage can be summarised as: *what* went wrong, and *who* is responsible?

*What went wrong:* Explanations commonly combine aspects of both the *natural* and the *social* (Goffman 1974), but the balance of this framing determines whether the identified problem is amenable to human control. To justify political intervention, blame for underperformance must be designated with a specific aspect of the system. In terms of *who is responsible*: the public, or a portion of the public, is generally cast in the role of protagonist, while other roles are determined by the narrator's strategic choices (Chatman 1978; Stone 2012). Blame may be located with the prior administration, or with a specific group within the population, either civilians (e.g. a culture of low aspirations), or actors within

the school system (e.g. schools, teachers). Stone (1988) notes that culpability may be portrayed as intentional and/or malicious, or inadvertent (i.e. benign villains). Strategic designation of blame also allows the storyteller to cast themselves in the role of hero, or ‘fixer’ of the crisis they have created (Stone 1989, 295).

Here it is important to distinguish between reports that are intended to inform policy, and the development of the policy story itself. Reports authored by the NP may be levelled across a range of contexts, and rather than allocate blame directly, they present explanations for high-performing systems’ success. The focus of these explanations provides a point of contrast for policymakers, who can use these explanations of high performance to denigrate either an aspect of their own system or a specific group in the domestic context (a *logic of emulation*). For example, reports which relate high performance to the quality of teachers in Singapore or Finland, and which focus on teachers’ level of qualifications, may be used to designate blame with teachers in the home context, whose lower standard of qualifications are used to portray them as inferior ‘quality’.

#### **4. The path to redemption (i.e. policy prescription)**

Policy narratives aim to promote a solution, which NPF refers to as the moral of the story (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 228). Ochs (2011) argues that ‘the moral of the story often organizes the construction of the narrative itself’, and that ‘often the point will be a moral evaluation of an occurrence, or psychological stance related to a set of events’ (71). ‘The central set of actions, or ‘resolutions’, are those actions of an agent to prevent the necessary unwanted consequences of the complicating event, which may lead to failure or success’ (van Dijk 1976, 555). As Fairclough (2003) observes, the ‘implication is that certain ‘good’ things will happen if ‘we’ implement the ‘inevitable’ policies’ (99). As Lingard and Rizvi (2010) note, the broader implication of the imaginary is that ‘there is no longer any choice but to pursue neoliberal policies’ (37). Again, this stage evokes two broad questions. Namely, *how can the problem be fixed*, and *who can fix it?*

The question of *how* an identified problem can be fixed brings us to the central role of Comparative Education, in the form of the NP, which is used to identify ‘best practices’/‘what works’ in high-performing systems and thereby support the story of control. Redemption is therefore possible only by learning the lessons of ‘world class’ systems. Such lessons are often identified through a logic of

emulation (inverting stages III & IV), whereby actors first highlight the success of foreign systems and locate the reasons for their success, and then proceed to designate blame by way of contrast. As Morris (2012) notes, the condition in these contexts is contrasted with the condition at home to provide impetus for reform.

A key feature of technocracy is that elites claim the right to rule based on their access to a body of expert knowledge. *The path to redemption* is premised on an alliance between international change experts (knowledge providers) and the presiding administration (knowledge users). Notably, knowledge providers may also offer educational services, and be brought in to 'save' the system and to set it on the path to salvation. The key aspect of this stage is demonstrating that the cause of the decline can be located, and that it is amenable to human control and therefore intervention. The focus of prescriptions reveals advocates' specific policy preferences, and represents a major point of actor divergence within the story. At the same time, Carney (2009) notes that policies and practices are generally promoted within a common "advanced liberal" understanding of the individual in relation to society, a type of frame that he terms 'policyscapes', which are 'increasingly standardising the flow of ideas internationally and changing fundamentally what education is and can be' (68).

### **Act III.**

#### **5. The idealised future**

As Booker (2004) observes, 'we see how every story, however mildly or emphatically, has been leading its central figure or figures in one of two directions. Either they end, as we say, happily, with a sense of liberation, fulfilment and completion. Or they end unhappily, in some form of discomfiture frustration or death' (18). Booker's emphasis on the fundamental themes of 'comedy' and 'tragedy' has historic parallels in the 'fortunate' and 'fatal' plots identified in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1996). Unlike most stories, however, the reader is presented with a 'choice' of ending. And yet, the options have been narrowed to produce a sense of inevitability about the proposed interventions. As Goodman (1954) observes, whereas in the beginning anything is possible, and in the middle certain things become probable, by the end everything is necessary.

Cobley (2014) claims that the 'thoughts and feelings in a narrative are dictated by anticipation of the conclusion' (17), while Weible and Schlager (2014) state that 'people tell stories to make sense of their personal experiences in the past,

present, and imagined future' (235). The idealised future represents the ultimate goal of the proposed interventions, reflecting Fairclough's (2005) claim that discourses tell us how things could, or should be. It can largely be derived from the conditions laid out in imagined ordinary, and *the call*, though it is often promoted by association with the proposed interventions (Lemke 1995). It may, (1) reflect the desirable conditions of the imagined ordinary, in the case that the rationale for reform is to pursue a return to a real or imagined past, before the identified crisis. Or, (2) it may depart from those conditions, in the case that the inciting incident has fundamentally changed the 'ordinary' wider environment, requiring a realignment of values, priorities and/or structures.

Analysis of this stage uncovers what is portrayed as worth striving for. This may reflect the preferences of elites or, as it is designed to persuade the wider public, may be aligned with commonly held values, outlooks and aspirations (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). Analysis can reveal those things that are considered by elites to have the greatest emotive value and, therefore, the greatest persuasive capacity (Rautalin and Alasuutari 2009). While the narrative is built on concern for nations' economic competitiveness in a globalising world, equity also features prominently, articulated within the frame as empowering individuals to function as knowledge workers in the 'global meritocracy' (Brown and Tannock 2009). These aims might be displayed as: (1) an abstract vision (state of perfection); (2) educational utopias; (3) fragments of utopias (i.e. a specific ideal); or (4) exemplary improvers (i.e. systems that are 'on the road').

**- The End -**

### **Summary**

This chapter identified a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric. At the level of policy, the schema may be used to explore how the central storyline is deployed and (re)interpreted within and across contexts (i.e. commonalities, points of divergence) to promote reform. It is not a rigid framework of linear progression, and narrators may draw on the elements in varying combinations, and to varying degrees. As Hawkesworth (2012) notes, the use of storylines is situational and strategic, and there is 'space for critical reflexivity within policy frames' (118). The story will inevitably be refracted according to the logic of local lenses, and combined with local narratives to support political agendas. This ties

the schema in with comparative literature that uses the concept of socio-logic (Schriewer 2000) and 'indigenization' (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006). As Carney (2009) notes, 'policy makers, leaders, and managers are much more than empty vessels' (81).

Lao (2015) notes that in the context of Thailand's current drive to become a knowledge economy, human capital and economic-centric arguments have been combined with a narrative that emphasises 'a humanistic "self-sufficiency" development paradigm', illustrating how the story may be nuanced and combined with local alternatives, even in cases that are ostensibly following its driving logic. Similarly, Carvalho and Costa (2014) look across six European countries, highlighting the widely varying reception of PISA in each case. Meanwhile, India declined to take part in recent rounds of PISA, citing its cultural bias. Alternatively, systems may opt for an approach to reform other than 'what works' in high-performing systems (Forestier and Crossley 2015), or adopt alternate legitimacy practices, for example through silent borrowing (Waldow 2009).

While the role of narrative in policymaking will clearly vary across contexts, the thesis is primarily concerned with how the narrative is used by actors promoting 'best practices', and engaging in transnational advocacy (i.e. the NP). Earlier I argued that storytelling is a process of narrowing possibility. In a well-crafted narrative, a sense of inevitability will have been manufactured by the time the narrator has reached stage 4, with additional impetus to accept the solution provided through the choice between a fortunate and fatal ending. With this in mind, it is possible to consider some criteria for narrative "quality", a focus which 'looks at the sense of a story, whether it is logical, whether it identifies events and their consequences, whether it evaluates, and whether there is evidence of transformation' (Bold 2012, 132).

Narratives must meet certain requirements to be deemed successful (i.e. persuasive), and these can be used for engaging critically with the NP. Various criteria have been proposed. Kaplan (1993), for example, argues that the test of narrative 'quality' is that it has a 'recognizable beginning, middle, and end', with a sense of a logical, happy ending (177), and that it must also be 'true' (178). Elsewhere, Kaplan (1986) asserts that such policy analysis must meet the same standards of *consistency*, *congruency*, and *unity* that literary theorists apply to fictional narratives. *Consistency* demands that any non-narrative assertion is presupposed by the narrative surroundings. Violation of this standard results in a form of *non sequitur*. *Congruency* relates to the relationship between narrative

statements, ensuring that they do not conflict with one another. Unity relates to whether the various sections of a story exhibit some relationship.

Fischer (2012 177-178) also highlights three main criteria: *narrative probability*, *narrative fidelity*, and *characterological coherence*. Narrative probability 'refers to the coherence of the story-whether it "hangs together"'. That is, whether the components are credibly linked together. This encompasses Kaplan's emphasis on both congruence and unity, and may focus on individual narratives, as well as the community as a whole. Narrative fidelity 'pertains to individual components of the story: whether they constitute accurate assertions about social reality and thus are good reasons for belief and action' (177). That is, it is concerned with whether the individual statements are "true". Finally, characterological coherence relates to the reliability and consistency of the narrator, and whether they can be trusted to give an honest account (178). This relates to perceptions of the narrator's expertise, which is a key facet of persuasion.

As Kaplan (1993) notes, to be effective, 'the narrator must know something that the character he describes does not know - namely, how the story comes out in the end' (181). Although this was originally raised to argue that narrative statements cannot apply to the future, in fact, it is precisely the strength of the NP. Edwards and Nicoll (2001) identify this form of persuasion as 'deliberative rhetoric', which is "future oriented and speculative" (105). In the context of technocracy, the expert (or policymaker) claims to be privy to knowledge unavailable to the lay person, or reader, who is then given a choice of ending. Consent, and it will end happily. Or resist, and risk allowing the future to descend into the nightmarish visions of a stagnating economy populated by second-rate global citizens. Ricoeur (1981) argues that a story that does not lead anywhere 'destroys our expectation of a moral or intellectual conclusion' (167). At the level of a societal storyline, this may have significant consequences, a point to which I will return to at the conclusion of the thesis.

It is now possible to refine the conceptualisation of the community engaging with the NP, and to present the NPF's rough framework as a guide for the upcoming analysis.

## Chapter IV

### Analytical framework: Actors and levels

#### Introduction

It is now possible to refine the conceptualisation of the community engaging with the new paradigm (NP), and to lay out a general framework for the remaining sections of analysis. First, I clarify the narrative policy framework's (NPF) alignment with the advocacy coalition framework (ACF). I argue that the community engaging with the NP does not meet the criteria for advocacy coalitions, and instead introduce the concept of a *discourse coalition*. Nonetheless, beliefs are implicit in storylines, and I argue that the ACF's hierarchy of beliefs may be used to nuance understanding of the NP's characteristics, and to inform the analysis in RQ2.

Second, I explore the concept of discourse coalitions in more detail, distinguishing between three basic levels of activity (*frame sponsor, norm-setting, and norm-using*), and arguing that actors across these levels do not necessarily interact or collaborate, but endorse and promote variations of the same broad storyline. Finally, I introduce the NPF's guidelines for multilevel analysis (macro, meso, and micro), and relate this to comparative literature that focuses on "global" education policies, and on contemporary processes of globalisation more generally. These insights are used to lay out the analytical framework for the remaining sections of the thesis, which is presented in the section summary.

#### ***The NPF's guide to analysis: advocacy coalitions***

The NP's policy orientation evokes the distinction between research and advocacy (Majone 1989), and explanation and expertise (Dale 2015). In both cases, the former tends to develop complex and conditional explanations, while the latter seeks to identify straightforward solutions (Hammersley 2013). As Stone (2012) asserts, though 'the different sides in an issue act as if they are trying to find the "true" cause... they are always struggling to influence which causal story becomes the main guide to policy' (283). This underlies the development of the NPF, and Shanahan, Jones et al. (2011) argue that advocates 'use words, images, and symbols to strategically craft policy narratives to resonate with the public, relevant stakeholders, and governmental decision makers, with the aim of producing a winning coalition' (536).

The NPF asserts that policy narratives should have generalizable content, and that ‘one way to allow for this... is through the use of *belief systems* that allow the researcher to select variable but bounded policy narrative content’ (Shanahan, Jones et al. 2011, 540). This is based on the understanding that ‘policies and programs are translations of beliefs that are communicated through policy narratives, the vehicles for conveying and organizing information’ (ibid.). The NPF uses the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) to identify and differentiate groups of actors within a policy subsystem. The ACF defines groups of actors as advocacy coalitions when they: (a) share a set of normative and causal beliefs, *and* (b) engage in a non-trivial degree of co-ordinated activity over an extended period of time (ten years or more) (Sabatier 1998, 39).

The ACF’s hierarchy of beliefs has been described as its ‘signature feature’ (Jenkins-Smith, Silva et al 2014, 484), in which the belief systems of coalitions are organized into an hierarchical, tri-partite structure. These are the *deep core*, *policy core*, and *secondary beliefs*, with higher/broader levels constraining more specific beliefs (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1994, 180). The deep core is positioned as the most fundamental and least flexible, and is defined by Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014) as the ‘normative and ontological axioms that shape an individual’s beliefs’ (485). The policy core is defined as the ‘relatively abstract beliefs concerning the underlying causes of a problem within a subsystem, or general strategies for dealing with a class of problems’ (498). Secondary beliefs are represented in advocates’ specific policy preferences (486).

The NPF organises these beliefs in the form of policy narratives and is premised on the simultaneous operation of narrative at three levels: macro, meso, and micro. The NPF’s focus on advocacy coalitions presents two clear problems for this thesis. First, the community engaging with the NP do not necessarily collaborate in any meaningful way, though there is evidence of some contact and/or collaboration between certain members. Second, advocates promote widely varying, and sometimes contradictory, policy solutions, and in this respect their secondary beliefs diverge. In short, the community of actors engaging with the NP do not meet the basic requirements for advocacy coalitions.

Weible, Sabatier et al. (2009) acknowledge that ‘the ACF is frequently applied and compared with other frameworks and theories’ (133), while Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt et al. (2014) observe that ‘rather than applying the entire framework... analysts [are] increasingly specializing in one or more of the [ACF’s]

subcomponents' (187). I accept that beliefs are embedded in narrative accounts, and use the ACF's hierarchy of beliefs to guide the analysis in RQ2. However, I will focus analysis at the more general level of discourse coalitions, which are united by their shared storylines. That is, actors focus on promoting and defending their storylines, rather than a coherent and well-defined system of shared beliefs (which are nonetheless implicit in the stories they tell). This necessitated another departure from the NPF<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Discourse coalitions: the policy raconteurs***

Discourse coalitions are positioned as the 'argumentative alternative' to the ACF (Fischer 2012), and defined by Hajer (1993) as 'the ensemble of a set of story lines, the actors that utter these story lines, and the practices that conform to these story lines, all organized around a discourse' (47). The concept is compatible with Ball's (2012) vision of transfer, whereby 'policies move through and are adapted by, networks of social relations or assemblages... involving diverse participants... with a variety of interests, commitments, purposes and influence, which are held together by subscription to a discursive ensemble, which circulates within and is legitimated by these network relations' (11). The main nuance thus lies in the organisation of these *discursive ensembles* into overlapping and mutually reinforcing storylines.

Members of a discourse coalition share a social construct (Hajer 1993, 45), and are not defined by instances of interaction or collaboration, but rather reinforce storylines through their activities (Hajer 1995). Whereas the ACF identifies *beliefs* as the primary driver of behaviour (Weible, Sabatier et al. 2009), discourse coalitions emphasise the primacy of shared storylines. These storylines 'function to condense large amounts of factual information intermixed with the normative assumptions and value orientations that assign meaning to them' (Fischer 2012, 87). Members are bound by the "storylines" that symbolically condense the facts and values basic to a belief system' (103), and stories serve as 'interpretive schemes', which may be vague on particular points and even contradictory in others (Hajer 1995).

Variations on the central story reflect actors' knowledge, experience, and agendas, and members promote varying iterations of the same story at different

---

<sup>4</sup> The NPF was developed in response to Sabatier's claim that narrative theory was 'not clear enough to be proven wrong', and therefore was not sufficiently scientific. Sabatier is the creator of the ACF, and the co-editor of the influential *Theories of the Policy Process*. It is therefore possible that this influenced the decision to align the NPF with the ACF.

times, or for different contexts or audiences (Hajer 1993). While certain assumptions and beliefs may be implicit in the storyline, coalition members may not actually *believe* (or even be aware of) these underlying aspects of the story. Rather, they may simply utilize the storyline's persuasive appeal to advance their specific interests, or be united by agreement on certain policy objectives or the use of certain policy instruments (Schmidt 2012, 101). The rift between these rival camps is not irreconcilable. Advocacy coalitions and networks are positioned as a subset of discourse coalitions (Schmidt 2012), and I will demonstrate how beliefs and assumptions can be identified through analysis of the storyline(s) used to promote reform.

The emphasis on storylines adopted in this thesis does not undermine the portrayal of the NP as a comparative genre, or its array of advocates as a *discourse community*. The main nuance in meaning lies with the realm and nature of activity. Whereas a discourse community may pursue esoteric and community-oriented goals in academic settings, members of a discourse coalition are invariably involved in forms of advocacy. The community's shared discourse is thus organised into the form of a storyline to emphasise its persuasive function. Coalition members have widely varying agendas and mandates, operating on different levels and across diverse contexts. Actors draw on the conditions of the imagined ordinary, but stories will diverge as the story progresses, allowing them to promote their specific policy preferences.

In short, the thesis will analyse the community at the level of a discourse coalition, focusing on shared storylines, but will draw on the ACF's hierarchy of beliefs when exploring how advocates overcome the issues associated with the genre's communicative purpose (RQ2). The thesis is not primarily concerned with coalition structure, or how members actually combine to influence policy outcomes in specific cases, but with understanding of the NP, and how it functions as a comparative genre. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish between a number of basic levels of activity to situate the analysis in this thesis, and as a foundation for future studies.

### ***Levels and dynamics***

I here identify three broad levels of activity: *frame sponsorship*, *norm-setting*, and *norm-using*. These categories are not entirely discrete, and actors may engage in a number of these activities at any time. In Chapter III, I highlighted the primary importance of establishing the frame, which provides impetus for reform and sets

the story on the desired trajectory. Key members, with high levels of resources, reputation, and/or influence, act as ‘frame sponsors’ (Rein and Schon 1993), and may be located in domestic contexts and/or operate internationally. The ultimate goal of sponsorship is what Hajer (1993) terms ‘discourse institutionalization’, whereby the frame both dominates the discursive space (structuration) and infiltrates the political domain, so that ‘the actual policy process is conducted according to the ideas of a given discourse’ (47). This attempt to purge the discursive space of alternate perspectives is alluded to by Takayama (2010):

Education reform debate [is] a discursive space where competing social groups produce and circulate their versions of the truth about the past, the present, and the future of education. (56)

Opposing discourse coalitions do not merely argue over specific policies, but debate the nature of social reality (Hajer 1995). With regard to the NP’s storyline, the OECD most clearly fits the role of primary frame sponsor. Woodward (2009) points out that one of the ways in which the OECD exerts an influence on nations is through ‘cognitive governance’, which involves engendering a sense of community among members (and non-members). This *comparative turn* is achieved in part through the promotion of its comparative datasets, and PISA in particular. I will explore this process in more detail in Chapter VI. This relates more generally to the concept of global governance, which has a long history, but which has become increasingly central to debates in international relations, and education governance, in recent decades.

Following Rosenau and Czempiel (1992), most studies generally acknowledge states as key actors, but broaden the analytic focus to account for the influence of international organizations and non-state entities, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and transnational corporations. Ozegercin and Weiss (2009) argue that future research on global governance should focus on relationships between states, and market actors and institutions in the context of globalization. The extent of these diverse actors’ mandate, ability for action, and agency varies. The authority of the OECD is sanctioned by its member nations, and in this respect, ‘domestic policy-makers grant them their agentive capacity by referring to them’ (Rautalin and Alasuutari 2009, 541). However, the OECD is not merely an extension of state apparatus, or a space for intergovernmental coordination, but is committed to promoting a specific ideological agenda.

Robertson and Dale (2015) highlight the ‘thickening’ of global governance, observing how since 2000 ‘a new set of global players’, including the OECD,

World Bank, McKinsey and Pearson, have ‘crowded out UNESCO and the [International Labour Organization] (ILO) as far as power, authority and influence goes’ (14). The involvement of private organisations such as McKinsey and Pearson has added another, commercial layer to the process. These actors operate as ‘policy marketers’ (McBeth and Shanahan 2005), and, rather than passively waiting for a ‘policy window’ (Kingdom 2003) to open, actively shaping debates to promote their agenda. While this norm-setting is pursued under the authoritative umbrella of organisations such as the OECD, utilising their datasets and basic story frame, they are increasingly influential in the promotion of specific sub-stories (*secondary framing*) and in forging new markets.

Though I will focus primarily on the range of narrative strategies in coalition publications, Ball (2012) points out that ‘ideas are made powerful by money, effective relationships and action on the ground’ (61). Ball identifies James Tooley<sup>5</sup> as a ‘policy entrepreneur *par excellence*,’ exploring how he takes ‘the authoritative discourses of neo-liberal economics... into influential and exclusive “global microspaces”’, and describing him as ‘a persuasive storyteller who is able to put faces and figures into the neoliberal imaginary’ (39-40). Similarly, Robertson and Verger (2012) note how the discourse surrounding PPPs was developed and spread by a small group of influential actors who shared a common commitment to the Chicago School, with the World Bank (in association with James Tooley) operating as a key sponsor of this particular sub-story. Andy Hargreaves’s is another high-profile entrepreneur, and his website<sup>6</sup> states that he is regularly invited to engage in consultancy around the world, and, at the time of writing (10.09.2015), his *Uplifting Leadership* tour is scheduled for locations around Australia and the UK.

Partisan media outlets and journalists may also influence political debate and public opinion. This relates to the distinction between the media as a *conduit*, ‘whereby media accounts transmit multiple preferences in the coverage of policy debates’, or as a *contributor*, whereby they act as ‘a source of policy preference’ (Shanahan, McBeth et al. 2008, 116). For example, the OECD has a department dedicated to raising the media profile of its datasets, publications, and policy lessons, and Grek (2008) explores some of the media’s role in marketing ‘the PISA spectacle’ in the UK. Ball (2012) notes how James Tooley’s research, which aimed to demonstrate that private schools were outperforming the public

---

<sup>5</sup> James Tooley is a Professor of Education Policy at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, and is prominent advocate of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.andyhargreaves.com/>

sector, was published by ‘the pro-market Cato Institute in the USA’, and by ‘Penguin India, a subsidiary of Pearson Education’ (42). Elsewhere, *The Economist*, which was 50% owned by Pearson until August 2015<sup>7</sup>, repeatedly published articles promoting the virtues of MOOCs<sup>8</sup>, which comprise a key strand of Pearson’s business strategy in Higher Education.

Where discourse structuration has been achieved, story elaborators may ‘hitch on’ to the frame (Rein and Schon 1993). Such *norm-using* reports (Majone 1989) accept the conditions of the imagined ordinary and reinforce the legitimacy of the frame, though with varying degrees of partisanship. This final level evokes the distinction between ‘principle’ and ‘auxiliary’ coalition members (Nowlin 2011, 47), and Fischer (1993) notes that often ‘selected elite experts are drawn into a working relationship with traditional political and economic elites’ to form a kind of ‘policy-discourse coalition’ (34). Fischer points out that ‘traditional elites remain the dominant partners in such relationships’ (34), though of course this balance may be tipped depending on the context of interaction. Of the sample reports listed in Chapter II, *Could Do Better* (Oates 2010) most clearly fits this description, and I will return to explore the context of its development in Chapter VIII.

***Guidelines for analysis: simultaneous operation at three levels.***

The NPF presents guidelines for multi-level analysis, spanning the macro, meso, and micro levels. These are distinct from the levels of activity outlined above. Jones, McBeth et al. (2014) clarify that ‘while these levels are understood to operate contiguously, it is also understood that the levels are not mutually exclusive and interact in critical ways’ (10). This is referred to as ‘simultaneous operation at three levels’ (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 230). Furthermore, the specific theoretical tools used to analyse narratives vary at each level (Shanahan, Jones et al. 2011, 540). Although this thesis does not focus on how actors combine to influence outcomes, the NPF’s guidelines for the varying levels of analysis help situate the study.

---

<sup>7</sup> Pearson sells Economist Group Stake for £469m, *The Guardian*, 12.08.2015, Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/aug/12/pearson-sells-economist-stake-exor> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

<sup>8</sup> A cursory web search, using the terms ‘the economist’ and ‘moocs’, will reveal a host of articles devoted to the topic since 2012. One, for example, asserts that ‘MOOCs are more than university lectures available online’ (2012), while another cites a study that found that ‘MOOCs can be more effective than traditional teaching’ (2014).

A full analysis of the influence of narratives on outcomes would necessarily extend beyond the analysis of the narrative content and strategies deployed in coalition publications. I here present the guidelines for analysis across each of the levels, and relate these to the comparative literature.

*Macro-level* analysis aims to develop understanding of the institutional and cultural context (Shanahan, Jones et al. 2011, 540). NPF focuses on the ‘cultural and institutional policy narratives that condition and permeate social bodies over long periods of time’, further noting that such narratives ‘likely span multiple policy subsystems’ (Jones, Shanahan et al. 2014, 19). These ‘clusters of linked sub-systems, public opinion, and policymaking venues... constitute the policy topography in which actors operate’ (Nowlin 2011, 47), and can be used to identify the ‘cultural frames’ (Rein and Schon 1994) which may influence the reception and interpretation of the storyline. At the macro level, the NPF emphasises historical analysis and political developments (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 231).

This sensitivity to the local topography is also a feature of the comparative literature, typified by Carney (2009), who identifies a ‘new mental for thinking about society and its relation to the state’ (85), but nonetheless maintains that:

This mental space may be influenced by a range of global forces, imaginative regimes, specific agencies, and their vested interests, but it is mediated by the state, and it is the state itself that creates the terms on which new regimes and technologies can be received. (65)

Lingard and Rizvi (2010) claim that ‘any attempt to rethink the role of policy in an era of globalization can no longer overlook how our social imaginary is being reshaped simultaneously by both global and local processes’ (35). Robertson and Dale (2015) point out that ‘bringing a new social and economic order... is not straightforward’, and ‘previous ways of organizing social life, and the norms that ensured these ways of life are embedded and reproduced, are thus challenged and transformed into new practices with rather different logics, forms of reason and outcomes’ (15). Appadurai (1996) captures the implications of this process in the concept of ‘third cultures’. Nuancing the concepts of structuration and institutionalization in this way complements the comparative literature which argues that the concept of “globalisation” does not equate to convergence, or the consensual homogenisation of education systems (Carney, Silova et al. 2012; Rappleye 2015).

*Meso-level* analysis in the NPF is focused at the level of the subsystem, or *agora narrans*<sup>9</sup>, investigating ‘the strategic construction and communication of policy narratives by coalitions’ (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 237). In this respect, ‘[it] widens the ACF by marrying bounded rationality and belief systems with an interpretation of social construction in assessing how coalitions engage in strategic framing’ (Weible, Sabatier et al. 2011, 353). Analysis ‘begins from the premise that the objective of stakeholders in a policy subsystem is to achieve a policy goal’ (Shanahan, Jones et al. 2011, 540), and ‘examines coalitional policy narratives by disaggregating them into their constitutive elements, strategies and represented belief systems’ (Shanahan, Adams et al. 2014, 69-70). At this level analysis may focus on the presence and/or activity of heretical coalitions, and how storylines are contested and/or silenced.

Increasingly, meso level analysis cannot be confined to a subsystem in a specific context. Valverde (2014) emphasises the interconnectivity that characterises ‘network[s] of public and private nongovernmental organisations, other public-private partnerships, international-domestic partnerships, and nation-states themselves’ (578). Beech and Larsen (2014) also identify the complexity of the networks in which actors circulating knowledge about education operate. Consequently, they promote the ‘spatial turn’, focusing on ‘network spatialities’ and drawing on Massey’s (2005) call for a ‘global sense of place’. This does not imply a flattening of culture, but rather increased flows and mobility. Carney’s (2009) concept of policyscapes has perhaps done most to capture the changing vistas of education transfer. Meanwhile, Ball (2012) identifies the rise of transnational advocacy networks (TANs), adopting Collier and Ong’s (2005) concept of ‘global assemblages’, which cross over and erase national boundaries to open new spaces for policy mobilities.

*Micro-level* analysis ‘is interested in the individual and how individuals both inform and are informed by policy narratives’ (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 230). Analysis at this level has a similar focus on systems of belief, and the strategic use of narrative elements, but may be explored through interviews or focus groups (either exclusively, or to supplement analysis of texts). Analysis at this level may attempt to unlock, and reveal the influence of narratives on individual actors. Focusing on individual actors is also recognised as important in the context of ACF, which emphasises that it is individuals that learn, rather than

---

<sup>9</sup> In ancient Greece, the *agora* was the physical and public space where citizens took action to achieve a desired policy goal, principally through reasoned and impassioned narratives.

coalitions as a whole (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt et al. 2014, 190). This micro-level focus relates to the issue of cognizance, and the interest in how the storyline pushes down on researchers to shape the field.

The schema of plot is presented in recognition of the fluidity of stories, the multiple and interrelated sites and levels of (re)interpretation and (re)production, and the varying ends that ostensibly similar stories may be mobilised to achieve. This reflects Rappleye's (2015) description of globalisation as 'a multiplicity of 'mini-projects' involving pluralities of actors who assign different meanings to similar events, given different positionalities, projects and structural limitations rooted in divergent histories, contexts and conceptual/discursive schemes' (82). Rappleye calls on an inductive approach and increased attention to the 'lifeworld' (Lebenswelt) of individual actors. This call to utilize the insights of phenomenology may be effectively pursued through the analysis of storylines. Insights from the philosophy of history and of consciousness, introduced in Chapter V, will aid reflection on this point.

***Summary: situating the study***

This chapter identified the NP as a discourse coalition. The focus on overlapping and mutually reinforcing storylines (which form around assumptions and beliefs) enables identification of the inherent characteristics of the NP (RQ1), even though actors do not collaborate directly, and do not agree on all points. I further argued that beliefs are implicit in storylines, and will draw on the ACF's tripartite hierarchy of beliefs to inform the analysis in RQ2. Though the thesis is not concerned with identifying the movement of "global" education policies, or the coalition's actual influence on policy outcomes in a specific case, it was nonetheless necessary to illustrate how the analysis in this thesis may be related to other studies, or developed to explore cases of transfer. To this end, I introduced the NPF's guidelines for multi-level analysis (macro, meso, and micro).

Table 3 (Below) provides an overview of the thesis structure and development, summarising how the concepts introduced in this chapter will be used to guide the analysis. The specific methods deployed within the framework will be introduced at the beginning of the relevant chapters. RQ1 and RQ2 focus analysis at the meso level, disaggregating the narrative into its constitutive elements, strategies and represented beliefs. The schema of plot developed in

Chapter III has already begun to clarify the storyline's constitutive elements, and this will be refined using tools from *genre analysis* in Chapter V to clarify its *rationale, assumptions, and underlying ideology*. The second stage of analysis in Chapter V is again guided by the story schema, turning to explore the storyline's symbolism through the work of Eric Voegelin.

The analysis addressing RQ2 will begin by investigating the key role played by the OECD as frame sponsor, providing the framework for the story in the form of the calculable world (introduced in Chapter VI). The remainder of Chapter VI will then clarify the paradox of control, which arises as advocates engage with the communicative purpose directly. In Chapter VII, the analysis focuses more concretely on the narrative strategies used to promote the story, and to overcome the issues associated with transfer. Robinson and Hawpe (1986) identify three elements to narrative thinking, 'the story schema, the story maker's knowledge and experience, and a diverse array of cognitive strategies' (115), and the story schema thus acts as the framework for the analysis in Chapter VII.

The story schema is combined with tools from *move analysis* (introduced in Chapter VII), a subset of *genre analysis* (introduced in Chapter V), to identify how actors use story elements to develop persuasive texts, and thereby achieve their communicative purpose. This stage of meso-level analysis is confined to the specific narrative strategies deployed by coalition members (NPF), and how these relate to their beliefs (ACF), and does not explore how the different actors combine to influence outcomes in a specific context, or the complex nature of the sub-coalitions and networks that permeate national boundaries. Though RQ2 reflects on the influence of the storyline at the micro-level, it does not explore this directly (e.g. through interviews with key actors).

RQ3 cuts across the three levels of analysis. First, it explores the policy topography in England and identifies how the story logic has infused the remit for the review. The schema is then combined with the narrative strategies identified in RQ2 (Chapter VII) to guide the analysis of the construction of the *framework for learning*. At this stage, the analysis moves to the micro-level, drawing on interviews with key individuals involved in the review process, gauging their belief in the storyline and cognizance of the core issues, and combining this with analysis of key documents used to inform the review.

It is now possible to move on to a more concrete exploration of the characteristics of the NP.

**Table 3. Overview of analytical framework**

RQs	Aim		Level	Method	Data & sources/literature	Approach
1	Identify the characteristics of the NP with regard to both aspects of <i>homo narrans</i> .	Communicative/ discursive: Chapter V	Meso Constitutive elements and beliefs implicit in storyline	Literature review/ genre analysis	Comparative literature & commentaries. Four sample reports	The story schema and genre analysis are used to identify characteristics (e.g. beliefs, assumptions, ideology)
		Symbolic/ Existential: Chapter V	Cultural/symbolic origins of storyline	Historical- philosophical review	Story schema, comparative literature, historical commentaries, philosophy of history and of consciousness	Searches for the storyline's origins, providing a basis for interpreting the strategies used to overcome the paradox of control (RQ2)
2	Identify how the NP overcomes the issues associated with education transfer	Stage 1: Constructing the calculable world Chapter VI	Macro/meso  Frame sponsorship	Literature review and document analysis	OECD reports & sociology of measurement (combined with RQ1)	Explores the construction of the calculable world at the symbolic level, focusing on the OECD's role as sponsor
		Stage 2: Overcoming the issues. Narrative and persuasion Chapter VI-VII	Meso  Norm-setting/using	<i>Genre analysis</i> : (preliminary stage) Narrative strategies (NPF), <i>move analysis</i> & ACF's beliefs	Stage 1: four sample reports Stage 2: Extended to larger corpus	Genre analysis clarifies assumptions and beliefs. Move analysis and schema explore narrative strategies (NPF) and beliefs (ACF)
3	Explore the influence of the NP on the review of the National Curriculum  Chapter VIII		Macro Policy topography Structuration/ institutionalization	Literature review, interviews, document analysis	Commentaries, DfE publications/sources, interview transcripts	Overview of the policy topography in England, and the institutionalization of the NP.
			Meso Construction of framework Norm-using	Document analysis & Interviews (guided by RQ2)	Could Do Better, Oates slides, speeches and interview transcripts	The construction of the framework, and the relationship between the storyline and the form of CE
			Micro Cognizance & strategies	Interviews, (iterative) document analysis	Interview transcripts, key reports, responses to critique	Focus on key actors' perception of the storyline and issues

## Chapter V.

### Characteristics of the NP: discourse and meaning-making

#### Introduction

This chapter addresses RQ1 directly, exploring the characteristics of the NP over two main levels. These levels relate to the *communicative/discursive* and the *existential* aspects of *homo narrans*. The first level (section a.) combines genre analysis with the schema of plot to identify the NP's *rationale*, *implicit assumptions* and *underlying ideology*. These aspects are contained in the conditions laid out in the imagined ordinary and are necessary to set the story on the desired trajectory. This analysis was published in *Comparative Education* (Auld and Morris 2014) and section (a) of this chapter draws on that article. Further characteristics relating to the comparative method, the beliefs implicit in the storyline (*deep core*, *policy core* and *secondary beliefs*), and the strategies for overcoming the issues associated with transfer are presented in Chapter VI and VII.

At the second level (section b.), I search for the deeper roots of the NP's storyline, identifying its existential undercurrent. I begin by asking "*what kind of story is this?*", using the schema of plot as a starting point for the analysis, and drawing on insights from the philosophy of history and of consciousness. Taking the inquiry to this level serves both an intrinsic and instrumental function. First, these perspectives are used to identify the symbolic properties of the NP, and its existential undercurrent, and to thereby deepen understanding of the NP's characteristics. Second, these perspectives broaden the theoretical base for the subsequent stages of analysis, aiding the interpretation of narrative strategies in RQ2, and the exploration of the forces that push down on researchers to shape the field.

Section (b) is presented in four parts. The first part (*The search for meaning*) introduces the theoretical perspectives used to aid reflection on the symbolic properties of the storyline. The second part (*Existential angst and systems of order*) introduces the role of myths with regard to the construction of order and the search for meaning in society. The third part (*Ersatz religion and the seduction of the new*) focuses more concretely on the NP's storyline itself. The final part (*Self-interpretation, eschatology and the meaning of history*) searches for the origins of the symbols that are represented in the NP's storyline. This

search provides deeper understanding of the NP's characteristics, and provides an important point for reflection on the analysis in RQ2 and RQ3.

First, I turn to the characteristics at the discursive/communicative level.

**(a) Genre Analysis: *What's in a story?***

I have identified the NP as a comparative genre and in Chapter III I situated the genre within a broader storyline, developing a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric. Chapter IV introduced Hajer's concept of discourse coalitions, which form around a shared storyline rather than clearly delineated beliefs. This shared storyline contains certain assumptions and beliefs, which are necessary to sustain the communicative purpose. Advocates implicitly endorse and promote these beliefs by retelling aspects of the story, and/or by engaging with the communicative purpose. While the ACF has no established method for identifying coalition beliefs, they may be accessed by combining the schema of plot developed in Chapter III with principles from *genre analysis* (Swales 1990), which positions the shared communicative purpose as a starting point for analysis, and as a basis for identifying aspects of its discourse and comparative method.

'Genre analysis is an approach or a set of analytic methods for studying particular texts within discourses' (Tardy 2011, 55). Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) assert that genres are intimately linked to a discipline's methodology (1), embody certain norms and values (1), and embody a specific ideology (24). They are 'neither neutral nor free from power dynamics' (Tardy 2011, 60) and, as discussed, promote a specific discourse to advance their communicative purpose. Bazerman (2004) provides guidelines to analysis, stating that the investigation begins by clearly stating the purpose and questions to limit the focus, and then selecting and applying the analytical tools according to the nature and purpose of the investigation.

The purpose has been stated in the research aims and questions, and this stage of inquiry focuses on the NP's *rationale*, *assumptions* and *underlying ideology*, here presented as a series of analytic categories. Further categories will be presented in Chapter VI, focusing on how advocates overcome the core issues associated with transfer (*comparative method*; *omissions and silences*; *dealing with critics*). In each case the overview begins by clarifying the content of the categories, and locates its function within the overall story. The identified features are necessary to sustain and/or deliver the communicative purpose, and

are contained in the story schema. The focus and content of the categories was originally explored and refined through an analysis of four influential texts:

Worlds Apart (1996)  
 McKinsey (2007)  
 McKinsey (2010a)  
 Oates (2010)

The analytic process and demonstration of these categories has not been repeated here as: (1) the content of the categories can be directly related to the content of the storyline highlighted above, and actors implicitly endorse these characteristics by engaging with the communicative purpose; (2) relevant aspects of the analysis of these texts has been integrated into the chapters answering RQ2 & RQ3 of the thesis, which uses a larger corpus of texts to develop and nuance the categories, thereby avoiding repetition; (3) the full demonstration of this phase of analysis has been laid out in the relevant journal article (Auld and Morris 2014). I now present the first three analytic categories.

### *1. Rationale*

The communicative purpose begs the question, *why is it necessary to identify 'best practices' in high-performing systems?* As noted, the communicative purpose only gains traction within the broader story, and the rationale can be summarised as:

*The development of "world class" schools.*

Alexander (2010) has noted the obsession of policymakers around the world with developing 'world class' schools, identifying it as a 'supremacist' and 'imperialist goal' (2012). 'World class' is specifically defined by reference to performance on "core competencies" in cross-national assessment surveys, most often PISA. As the former Minister of Education, Charles Clarke (2012), explained, 'today education ministries throughout the world look at measures like the PISA scores and take them as the basis for re-evaluating their own national approaches' (276).

The development of world class schools is a necessary precondition for the greater prize of national/individual economic advancement. It also relies on a series of assumptions.

### *2. Assumptions*

The above rationale and its source of evidence embody a series of assumptions:

*(a) (i) The aims and outcomes of educational systems are directly commensurable and (ii) education systems' outcomes are accurately captured by cross-national comparative educational assessment surveys.*

These assumptions are contained in the portrayal of the ordinary world and underpin the change in condition used to establish the frame. Without assumption (i) the rationale of the NP is fatally undermined, for educational systems cannot be compared on normative terms. Without assumption (ii) the designations high and low performance cannot be attributed to any system, and the NP lacks a meaningful source of evidence from which to pursue its ambition.

As the preceding review of the literature highlighted, improving performance on tests such as PISA is often positioned as vital for nations seeking a competitive advantage, and the NP reinforces its rationale through this education-economy nexus, providing the second assumption:

*(b) Systems' performance in cross-national comparative assessment surveys can be directly related to future global-economic competitiveness.*

Without this connection, the development of “world class” schools rests on an arbitrary competition, for competition’s sake, and without tangible undesirable consequences any decline in ‘standards’ relative to other nations would be unlikely to motivate a change to the status quo.

### *3. Ideology*

The NP’s ideology is embedded in its ambition, rationale and assumptions. Its key features can be further explored by situating the genre within the broader context of its emergence, which largely follows SER’s conception of progress through statistical comparisons and managerialism (Lingard, Ladwig et al. 1998).

As Howarth and Griggs (2012) assert:

*Ideology is not defined by comprehensive and coherent worldviews, but by a discursive naturalization of contingently constructed meanings and identities. New public management can thus be seen as an ideology insofar as it presents a totalizing story about how public administration and policy can be subject to new ideas associated with “managerialism”. (332)*

The associated shift towards decentralization, statistical comparison and accountability reflects the transition into what Cowen (1996) terms a ‘late-modern’ educational paradigm, one driven by an ideology of usefulness. As Allias (2012) notes, ‘a need for a “new educational paradigm” is suggested because of changes in society and economies, and “traditional” approaches to education are

linked to economic backwardness' (254). The research ambition necessarily diverts attention away from other purposes of schooling (e.g. equity and access; social cohesion and citizenship; personal development and capability) and onto measurable academic standards. The ideological undercurrent follows the neoliberal imaginary and can be expressed as:

*An instrumental view of the purposes of education, characterised by a neoliberal emphasis on decentralisation, accountability and markets, and, the cultivation of human capital for global economic competition.*

These preliminary categories underpin the conditions of the *imagined ordinary*, and are necessary to set the story on its desired trajectory. A further series of assumptions underpin the story of control and these will be elaborated in Chapter VI. Kamens and McNeely (2010) provide initial insight, highlighting a 'world education ideology' that is embodied in international agencies, NGOs and national development agencies, which emphasises:

(1) Education as a source of national and world progress, (2) the hegemony of science as a critical means to development, and (3) the idea that educational systems— and, indeed, society in general—can be managed to produce desirable outcomes.

Dale (2015) highlights the influence on CE, stating that 'Comparative Education is... being driven by what we might refer to as a modernist/meliorist... *Project* (as seen in its historical association with 'Modernisation'), in harness of the pursuit of methodology/methodologies that would enable that progress to be achieved' (344). It is now possible to search for a deeper understanding of the story's origins, and the forces that are shaping the field. This moves the inquiry into an exploration of myths in contemporary culture and politics, drawing on the insights of the philosophy of history and consciousness.

### **(b) Myths, and Meaning-Making**

The first part (*The search for meaning*) of this section introduces the theoretical perspective used to address the existential aspect of *homo narrans*, and explains how it relates to the aims of the thesis. The second part (*Existential angst and systems of order*) introduces the existential function of stories at a general level, exploring the construction and maintenance of systems of order, and the self-interpretation of society through symbols. The third part (*The seduction of the new and ersatz religion*) develops this analysis by focusing concretely on the

symbolic properties of the NP's storyline. The final part (*Self-interpretation, eschatology, and the meaning of history*) searches for the origins of this symbolism, a search that is pursued primarily through the work of Eric Voegelin.

### ***The search for meaning: theoretical perspectives***

This section introduces the theoretical perspective used to address the existential aspect of *homo narrans*, and explains how it relates to the aims of the thesis. Chapter III mapped out the basic contours and elements of the storyline, highlighting the function of the NP in supporting the story of control. Situating comparative research in this way casts coalition members as protagonists, occupying the role of expert and charged with supporting the story of control. This section turns the focus towards the neglected existential aspect of *homo narrans*. By searching for its deeper origins, the aim is to locate the tension inherent in the storyline, and the pressure it exerts on the individual actors who engage with the communicative purpose. The ideas and theories introduced in this section share an interest in Husserl's *phenomenology*.

Edmund Husserl was interested in how phenomena are experienced in human consciousness, and how individuals construct meaning, rather than searching for causes of phenomena or an objective reality. Eric Voegelin was influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, noting (1978) that he was engaged in 'long years of discussions' with Alfred Schutz on the topic, with both considering it to be 'the most competent analysis of certain phenomena of consciousness that was available at the time' (9). Equally, however, Voegelin states that they both felt that certain problems 'made it impossible to apply the phenomenological method, without further development, to the social phenomena that were [their] primary concern' (9). While Schutz attempted to address these problems when developing his phenomenological sociology<sup>10</sup>, Voegelin took a different route, dissatisfied with Husserl's attempt to exclude the historical dimension from the constitution of consciousness<sup>11</sup>. For Voegelin, the missing historical dimension

---

<sup>10</sup> This *phenomenological sociology* was further developed by two of Schutz's former students, P. Berger and T. Luckman in their seminal text, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1957).

<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Voegelin (1978) recognised in Husserl's work a symbolic periodization of history common to Enlightenment philosophies, and thinkers such as Comte, Hegel and Marx, the purpose of which he argues was 'abolishing a "past history" of mankind and letting its "true history" begin with the respective author's work' (1978, 10). Husserl used the periodization to exclude the historical dimension from man's consciousness, a move which Voegelin suspected had been developed for "pragmatic" reasons. The context and significance of this symbolic periodization will be covered in the course of this chapter.

was not a history of ideas, or a piece of “past history”, but ‘the permanent presence of the process of reality in which man participates with his conscious existence’ (10).

Voegelin’s philosophy of history, which latterly developed into a philosophy of consciousness, is introduced in the upcoming review. Federici (2002) summarises it as providing ‘an understanding of political, social and existential order that demonstrates how historical experiences are the spiritual substance of contemporary order’ (186). Past events do not provide a blueprint for human action, but the engendering experiences of order may be ‘imaginatively re-experienced in a way that shapes human consciousness and prepares it for the specific challenges of contemporary life’ (186). Voegelin introduces this continuity through the concept of the *metaxy*, the permanent ‘in-between’ structure of existence, whereby human consciousness is characterized by the awareness of its participation in reality (the cosmos), but is fundamentally unable to grasp the nature of that reality of which it is a part.

As this ‘constitution of being’ is a necessary aspect of our participation in reality, the resulting tension is latent in all times and places, and the historical experience that one individual participates in is equivalent to those who come both before and after. While these ideas will not be used to ‘read the global’ directly, they may present an alternative basis for reflection on the forces at work. Much of Voegelin’s scholarship was motivated by an attempt to understand how these deeper forces underpinned modern ideologies, their associated political movements, and patterns of reasoning. In *Anamnesis* (1978), one of Voegelin’s later and most revealing works, he reflects on the intellectual climate of the 1920s, stating that though the reasons why the various ideologies were *wrong* were sufficiently well known, still no ideologist could be persuaded to change his position under the pressure of argument. This peculiar phenomenon provoked the following reflection:

Why do [they] refuse to apperceive what they apperceive quite well? Why do they expressly prohibit anybody to ask questions concerning the sectors of reality they have excluded from their personal horizon? Why do they dogmatize their prison reality as the universal truth? And why do they want to lock up all mankind in the prison of their making? (3)

Voegelin concluded that this resistance to rational discourse ‘had existential roots far deeper than the debate conducted on the surface’ (6). The full relevance of

---

Voegelin's diagnosis as a basis for analysing the NP will emerge in the course of the remaining chapters, but centres on the relationship that Voegelin theorises between these two strands, (i) the existential undercurrent to modern ideologies, and (ii) the construction of systems, characterised by the attempt to exclude sectors of reality that lie beyond the thinker's personal horizon (i.e. that do not support their ideological vision).

The first of these aspects relates to the aims of RQ1, identifying the characteristics of the NP's storyline at the existential level. The second aspect relates to RQ2, how advocates overcome the issues associated with policy transfer (i.e. how knowledge is *being done*). Like Voegelin, I was struggling to understand the peculiar dissonance that had emerged in the preliminary stage of genre analysis (Auld and Morris 2014), whereby researchers would first accept the limitations interfering with their communicative purpose, but then contrive to ignore, marginalise, or reject them outright.

Voegelin's analysis encouraged me to explore this behaviour further, investigating how the individual strategies deployed by researchers combined to construct a system that is internally coherent, but which was closed to reality (see Chapter VI). However, it was Voegelin's insistence that this behaviour must have existential roots which gave his work such exceptional explanatory power, and unique relevance to the aims of this thesis. While I had begun to explore the mythic properties of the NP's storyline, and scholars who identified religious parallels, these sources did not penetrate to the level of experientially equivalent symbols, or develop a related theory on the construction of knowledge.

The significance of Voegelin's work for this thesis then lies not only in the explanatory power it provides on each of the first two research questions, but the way in which these two strands are tied together. I was able to apply his theoretical insights in parallel to the theories from political science that were being mobilised to explore the communicative aspect of *homo narrans*, developing the two levels of analysis concurrently. By moving the storyline to the societal level and searching for its symbolism and mythic properties, I reconnect the concept of *homo narrans* with its neglected existential aspect.

At this level, it is apt to reflect on the relevance of *existential psychology*, rather than the behavioural and cognitive strands that largely underpin the NPF and ACF. The various strands of existential psychology were also inspired by Husserl's phenomenology, focusing on setting aside dogma and preconceptions to access the individual's actual experience. As May (1994) points out, its basic

concern lies with the distinction between what is *abstractly true*, and what is *existentially real* for a given individual. The distinctions and overlap between these perspectives and levels will be explored with regard to the issue of cognizance in Chapter VI. For now, I begin with a general overview of the relevance of myths in contemporary society, before focusing the analysis through the insights provided by the philosophical investigations of Eric Voegelin.

### ***Existential angst and systems of order***

This section introduces the existential function of stories, exploring the construction and maintenance of systems of order, and the self-interpretation of society through symbols. In this respect, it takes a similar starting point to Singer's (2013) *The Vision Thing*, which begins with the assumption that there are 'deep, highly charged, relationships between mythological reality, psychological reality, and political reality' (3).

Cobley (2014) argues that even 'the most familiar, most primitive, most ancient and seemingly most straightforward stories reveal depths that we might hitherto have failed to anticipate' (2). Abbott (2008) uses the term 'masterplots' to refer to archetypal, or recurring, stories and themes, arguing that, 'we tend to give credibility to narratives that are structured by [them]', that 'all national cultures have their masterplots, some of which are local variations on universal masterplots', and that 'the more culturally specific the masterplot, the greater is its practical force in everyday life' (46-47).

Although Stone (1988) generally guides the analytic focus towards the strategic causal sequencing of problem-solutions, she does hint at their more fundamental role, arguing that 'narrative stories provide explanations of how the world works'. Fischer (2012) goes further, arguing that the concept of a storyline is 'the basic mechanism for creating and maintaining discursive order' (86) within society. The deeper significance of this function was recently recognised by U.S. President Barack Obama, who reflected:

The mistake of my first term... was thinking that this job was just about getting the policy right. And that's important. But the nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Boerma, L. (2012). Obama Reflects on his Biggest Mistake as President, IN *CBS News* online, 12.07.2012. Available at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-reflects-on-his-biggest-mistake-as-president/> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)

Voegelin (1997, 225) refers to this as the 'shelter function', whereby governments and political societies come into existence not simply to support material needs, but to give life meaning. As Federici (2002, 63) points out, this includes articulating the society's place in the larger order of the cosmos. Rollo May (1991) argues for the primary importance of myth in human communication, and claims that 'the denial of myths... is itself part of *our refusal to confront our reality and that of our society*' (25). As he explains:

Every individual seeks- indeed must seek if he or she is to remain sane- to bring some order and coherence into the stream of sensations, emotions, and ideas entering his or her consciousness from within or without. (29)

May relates this fundamental need for order and meaning to the central role that myths have played throughout human civilization, describing them as 'narrative patterns that give significance to our existence' (15), and arguing that:

The myth is a drama which begins as a historical event and takes on its special character as a way of orienting people to reality. The myth or story carries the values of society: by the myth the individual finds his sense of identity. (26)

Describing the NP as a form of myth is not intended to undermine it. May (1991) points out that 'the deprecation of myth... began with the Christian Fathers in the third century A.D. as their way of fighting against the common people's faith in Greek and Roman myths', arguing that 'only the Christian message was true and the Greek and Roman stories were "only" myths' (May 1991, 24). May duly argues that myths are an integral aspect of human communication, giving us: our *sense of identity*; our *sense of community*; our *moral values*; and helping us deal with the *mystery of creation* (30-31). As Sandoz (1971) states, 'the creation of myth is the work of men motivated by the anxiety of existence' (45).

Voegelin (1978) describes a 'mythical symbol' as 'a finite symbol supposed to provide "transparence" for a transfinite process', for example, 'a myth of creation, which renders transparent the problem of the beginning of a transfinite world' (21). Samuel and Thompson (1990) have argued that 'myth is, or ought to be, quite central to the study of popular movements' (5), pointing out that 'too many of us weigh evidence with an instinctive naivety which rests on our failure to recognize rationalistic realism as the special myth of our own Western culture' (4). May (1991) also insists that 'myth is essential for progress in our understanding of science and of culture' (74), and the search for meaning in our experience of reality represents a persistent theme across disciplinary boundaries.

In theology, Cupitt (1991) argues that ‘the reality the stories produce is an arena over which different stories struggle for supremacy, a space in which different people are attempting in their various ways to make their own lives make sense’ (21). From the perspective of Cultural Theory, Tomlinson (2006) argues that ‘all historical cultures... have constructed meaning via localized practices of collective symbolization; this is as near to a universal feature of human societies as we can probably get’ (162). Similarly, from the perspective of anthropology, Levi-Strauss (1979) claims that ‘to speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak of the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind, as far as they have been recorded all over the world, the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order’ (13).

This interest in the search for *order* and *meaning* across civilizations occupies Voegelin’s magnum opus, *Order and History*, which he describes as ‘a philosophical inquiry concerning the principal types of order of human existence in society and history as well as the corresponding symbolic forms’ (*preface to volume two*). In *The New Science of Politics* (1952), a distillation of his grander undertaking, Voegelin observes:

Human society... is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism, in various degrees of compactness and differentiation - from rite, through myth, to theory - and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a *cosmion*<sup>13</sup>, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence. The self-illumination of society through symbols is an integral part of social reality, and one may even say its essential part, for through such symbolization the members of a society experience it as more than an accident or convenience; they experience it as of their human essence. (27)

Voegelin (1952) identifies this as *existential representation*, which orients the self and society to the larger universal order (i.e. the cosmos). He distinguishes this from *elemental representation*, which relates to the political and institutional structures that provide the governed peoples with a voice in government. Moreover, this process of the self-illumination of society through symbols will inevitably be articulated and stabilised in some form of myth (May 1991, 27).

The focus on myth therefore serves to undergird our understanding of discourse and ideology, and to add a further level for reflection. For now, it is sufficient to note that the analysis of stories may go beyond the causal-

---

<sup>13</sup> The *cosmion* is used to mean ‘the little world of order’, which a society creates through self-interpretive symbols and corresponding experiences. It is positioned as a higher order that requires the subordination of human will to a transcendent reality. Totalitarian regimes, by refusing to recognize anything other than this intramundane reality, are said to substitute the *cosmion* for the cosmos.

sequencing of problem-solutions to search for their deeper role in the creation (and maintenance) of systems of order and meaning in society. It is therefore apt to reconsider the nature of the storyline in which the NP is embedded, searching for its deeper origins. My aim is to provide a basis for reflection (though perhaps not definitive answers) on the origins, nature and symbolic effects of contemporary governance, and the role and form of CE within that context.

In this respect, I follow Voegelin (1952) in ‘an exploration of the symbols by which political societies interpret themselves as representatives of a transcendent truth’ (1).

### ***The seduction of the new & ersatz religion***

I have thus far mapped the contours of the storyline, and situated the NP within that storyline. I have identified the characteristics of its discourse and underlying ideology. Next, I explore the origins of the storyline, searching for its symbolic properties and existential undercurrent. The shape and evolution of the field will then be studied with regard to the pressures that the storyline exerts on the researchers who engage with the communicative purpose. This section clarifies the symbolic properties of the NP’s storyline, building on the schema of plot outlined in the Chapter IV, and the two key aspects of the story arc: decline (i.e. improvement) and control.

Although the analysis has explored how PISA data is used to construct a climate of fear, and to develop variations of the story of decline, systems are not condemned to tragic ends. As Stone (1988) notes, ‘stories that move us from the realm of fate to the realm of control are always hopeful, and through their hope they invoke our support’ (114). The perspective is highlighted by Carvalho and Costa (2014), who argue that, ‘the strength of PISA also lies in the hope it creates. PISA provides optimism about the possibility of reform and creates confidence in national policy actors-the encouragement of having in their hands the so crucial banner of “need to change”’ (7).

Samuel and Thompson (1990) point out that ‘the idea of progress... very often serves as a unifying device in our narratives’ (4), and May (1991) explores the American fascination with progress, relating it to the people’s peculiar rootlessness and therefore mythlessness, and referring to the allure as ‘the seduction of the new’ (101). He explains:

Change is a great word in America; we not only believe in it, we worship it... In politics, which is a pattern of myths par excellence, the myth of the new is of great

importance... The real question, namely, the quality of the new, is rarely asked. It is assumed in this New World to be better because it is new. This is the myth of change. (102-103)

May searches for the origins of the fascination, contrasting it with ancient civilizations and specifically the Greek myth of Apollo:

The Apollonian stands for cultures characterized by reason, harmony, balance, and justice. The symbol for Apollonianism is the *circle*. The symbol for Faustianism, on the contrary, is the *straight line*, always moving in progress, which is our contemporary belief. (218)

This fixation on progress and change provides a useful starting point, and may provide insight into the nature and development of contemporary processes of governance in the US, and in England. And yet the PISA story is not one of arbitrary change, for it presents a clear vision of its end goal and, moreover, knowledge of how such a future can be attained. The theme is picked up by Barnett and Finnemore (1999), describing international aid agencies as purposive actors, who, 'armed with a notion of progress, an idea of how to create a better life, and some understanding of the conversion process', have become the 'missionaries of our time' (712). Although they note the religious nature of this crusade, they do not explore the deeper relevance of the analogy, or its cultural origins.

Gray (2014) presents insight into the impulse, noting the key influence of the Christian myth of salvation:

Modern myths are myths of salvation stated in secular terms. What both kinds of myth have in common is that they answer to a need for meaning that cannot be denied. In order to survive, humans have invented science. Pursued consistently, scientific inquiry acts to undermine myth. But life without myth is impossible, so science has become a channel for myths-chief among them, a myth of salvation through science. (82)

The actual process by which this myth of salvation was translated into secular terms, however, is less clear in Gray's analysis<sup>14</sup>. To develop understanding of this process, and to thereby clarify the implications, I now turn to Eric Voegelin's critique of Western modernity.

Like May (1991), Voegelin (1968) argued that 'the breakdown of institutions, civilizations, and ethnic cohesion evokes attempts to regain an understanding of the meaning of human existence in the given conditions in the world' (7). Among

---

<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, John Gray has identified Norman Cohn's (1957) *The Pursuit of the Millennium* as 'the book that changed my life'. Available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2009/02/norman-cohn-john-gray-world> (Last accessed 10.02.2016). I will return to discuss the relevance of Cohn's analysis below.

traditions as wide-ranging as Christianity, Manichaeism, and Heliopolitan slave cults, Voegelin identifies a diverse group of Western thinkers he terms “gnostics”, arguing: ‘as one of the most grandiose of the new formulations of the meaning of existence, belongs gnosticism’ (Voegelin 1968, 7). I will return to consider the use of this term shortly. Voegelin argued that the intellectual systems of such thinkers are constructed around ‘complex symbols which can be recognised as modifications of the Judeo-Christian idea of perfection’ (65), in which ‘human nature does not find its fulfilment in this world, but only in the *visio beatifica*, in supernatural perfection through grace in death’ (65). The associated symbolism, and its manifestation in western intellectual and political traditions, is summarised as follows:

Christian life on earth takes its special form from the life to come in the next. It is shaped by sanctification, by the sanctification of life. Two components can be distinguished in the Christian idea of perfection... As a movement towards a goal, it is referred to as the *teleological* component. Further, the goal, the telos, toward which the movement is directed is understood as the ultimate perfection; and since the goal is a state of highest value, this second component is called the *axiological*.

In gnostic perfection, which is supposed to come to pass within the historical world, the teleological and axiological components can be immanentized either separately or together.

When the teleological component is immanentized, the chief emphasis of the gnostic-political idea lies on the forward movement, on the movement towards a goal of perfection in this world. The goal itself need not be understood very precisely; it may consist of no more than the idealization of this or that aspect of the situation, considered valuable by the thinker in question.

In the second type of derivation, the axiological, the emphasis falls on the state of perfection in the world. Conditions for a perfect social order are described and worked out in detail and assume the form of an ideal image. ... but the design for perfection need not always be as carefully worked out... much more common are those depictions of a desirable final state that are designed as negatives of some specific evil in the world. The list of these evils has been familiar since antiquity... poverty, sickness, death, the necessity of work. (66-67)

In this respect, May’s formulation, *the myth of change*, lacks the axiological component, implying that we may be satisfied with a conception of progress that does not present a clear end goal (a point to which I will return). As Voegelin (1952) notes, the first formulation is characteristic of progressivist movements, in which the final aim is not necessarily clarified, but which ‘assume a selection of desirable factors as the standard and interpret progress as qualitative and quantitative increase of the present good- the “bigger” and “better”’ (121). While this may be associated with NPM, the NP develops this storyline by presenting a clear vision of the end goal, characterised as a state of economic flourishing (for

the world, the nation, and the individual). The axiological component need not necessarily present an all-encompassing vision, such as that found in Thomas More's *Utopia*, but may be viewed as singular ideals, or 'fragments' of utopias. Voegelin continues:

In the third type of derivation the two components are immanentized together, and there is present both the conception of the end goal and knowledge of the methods by which it is to be brought about. We shall speak of cases of this third type as *activist mysticism* (68)

It should be clear that the basic components of the decline-control storyline outlined above, and which are inherent in the storyline of the NP, correspond with the symbolism laid out in this third derivation. Visions of this utopia, or the state of perfection, are found in depictions of high-performing and fast-improving systems, or in abstract and idealised visions of an integrated and inter-dependent global meritocracy, populated by empowered knowledge workers, functioning as global citizens. This is the *axiological* component. Second, the *teleological* component, the movement towards the *telos*, is sustained by expert knowledge of 'what works'. While the parallels in the symbolism are striking, its relevance for the analysis in this thesis must yet be elaborated. This requires a more detailed understanding of the origins and characteristics of the group of thinkers that Voegelin identified as gnostics, and the construction and maintenance of systems of order. For now, the NP's symbolic properties may be summarised as follows:

*A quasi-religious movement, characterised by belief that: from a wretched world a good one must evolve historically; such salvation is possible through man's own efforts; and, this should be achieved through the construction of a formula for salvation, presented in the form of expert knowledge (i.e. what works).*

These properties have implications for the forthcoming analysis, which focuses on how researchers overcome the issues associated with the identification and transfer of education 'best practices'. First, however, it is necessary to explore the origins and nature of this symbolism more directly.

### ***Self-interpretation, eschatology, and the meaning of history***

This section searches for the symbolic origins of the storyline, and is pursued primarily through the work of Eric Voegelin. Although the density and scope of Voegelin's scholarship precludes a full review, a brief introduction is necessary to provide some foundation for clarifying its relevance for the issues explored in this thesis. As Havard (1971) notes '[Voegelin's] main concern [in NSP] is the self-interpretation of the Western world that took place through the Christian

experience, and the subsequent distortions of those symbols in the modern era' (63). Franz (2005) describes Voegelin's NSP as 'one of the greatest accomplishments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (28), but notes that the concept of Gnosticism itself has lost its viability. Indeed, by the 1970s Voegelin himself reflected that he would probably not use the term if he were starting again, primarily due to developments in historical scholarship and the recovery of ancient gnostic texts that forced a revision to his portrayal of the tradition.

Webb (2005) claims that losing the term gnosticism 'would not necessarily invalidate the analytic category Voegelin constructed... since the purpose was not primarily to describe ancient phenomena but to help us understand some modern ones for which the evidence is a great deal clearer' (49). In this respect, persisting with the term may detract from the core of the argument. Franz (2005) contends that it is with good reason that Voegelin never renounced his analyses in *The New Science of Politics* (1952), and that 'the extent of the damage caused by conceptual problems is rather superficial, rarely penetrating to the theoretical core of what Voegelin wishes to emphasize in particular writings' (42). "Gnosticism" was merely a concept that corresponded to a phase in Voegelin's research project, and one which he was able to nuance later in his career in response to subsequent developments (Rossbach 2005, 89). The terminology is not as important for the current inquiry as the essence of the category, which will inform the analysis and interpretation in the remaining chapters.

Franz (1998, 36-37) enumerates some of Voegelin's achievements,: (1) showing how apparently dissimilar movements such as modern ideologies are characterised at a more fundamental level by a common set of motivations; (2) showing how these ideologies, taken as a group, are not merely novelties created by the pragmatic circumstances of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but are, rather, manifestations of a pattern of consciousness that is essentially perennial, with intelligible precursors in the middle ages and antiquity; (3) accounting for the similarities that have led many scholars to refer to immanentist movements as "secular religions" in a way that permits us to see their seemingly religious elements without losing sight of what distinguishes them from "authentic" religions; (4) helping us understand the motivations and character of those who are spiritually disordered<sup>15</sup> in a subtle and balanced way. This section focuses on

---

<sup>15</sup> Voegelin's diagnosis of individuals as 'spiritually disordered' referred to a resistance to philosophical reasoning, which he elsewhere termed *logophobia*. The circumstances of this diagnosis will be enumerated in due course.

the first three of these achievements, while the final aspect is addressed in an upcoming section.

In *The New Science of Politics* (1952), Voegelin introduces his critique of Western modernity, beginning his account with 'the clash between the various types of truth in the Roman Empire (that) ended with the victory of Christianity' (106). Voegelin argues that the demise of Greco-Roman polytheism resulted in the de-divinization of society, meaning that 'human existence in society became reordered through the experience of man's destination, by the grace of the world-transcendent God, toward eternal life in beatific vision' (107). Voegelin highlights the significance of St. Augustine's conception of the Trinity, and the distinction between profane history, 'in which empires rise and fall', and sacred history, which was 'embedded in transcendental history... (and) has direction toward its eschatological fulfilment (118).

The notion that profane history had no such destination or purpose - and that fulfilment lay 'beyond nature' - did not sit well with twelfth century western Europeans, whose civilisation was strongly growing:

Twelfth-century western European man could not be satisfied with this view of a senile world waiting for its end; for his world was quite obviously not in its decline, but, on the contrary, on the upsurge. Population was increasing, areas of settlement were expanding, wealth was growing, cities were being founded, and intellectual life was intensifying. (Voegelin 1968, 69)

Voegelin (1952) argues that the existential problems that arose from the de-divinization of society and the conception of profane history were exacerbated by the uncertainty inherent in Christianity, in which 'communication with the world-transcendent God is reduced to the tenuous bond of faith', with faith defined as 'the substance of things hoped for and the proof of things unseen' (122). As Voegelin notes, 'ontologically, the substance of things hoped for is nowhere to be found but in faith itself; and, epistemologically, there is no proof for things unseen but again this very faith' (122). The more widely the faith spread, the greater were the number of individuals who did not have the 'spiritual stamina' to sustain such a heroic feat of faith. The problem, Voegelin argues, was accelerated by the progress in education, literacy, and intellectual debate which characterised the high Middle Ages, which brought home the magnitude of the task to the masses (123).

While Voegelin traces a long social and intellectual process of 're-divinization', he identifies the end of the twelfth century as the point when it produced a definite symbolism. Specifically, he highlights the innovation of Joachim of

Flora<sup>16</sup>, who ‘broke with the Augustinian conception of a Christian society when he applied the symbol of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) to the course of history’ (111), a move which Voegelin argues ‘was an attempt to endow the immanent course of history with a meaning that was not provided in the Augustinian conception’ (119). Joachim’s innovation is summarised as follows:

In his speculation, the history of mankind had three periods corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity. The first period of the world was the age of the Father; with the appearance of Christ began the age of the Son. But the age of the Son will not be the last one; it will be followed by the age of the spirit. The three ages were characterized as intelligible increases of spiritual fulfilment... The stages had comparable internal structures and a calculable length... [and] it appeared that each age opened with a trinity of leading figures, that is, with two precursors, followed by the leader of the age himself... The leader of the first age was Abraham; the leader of the second age was Christ; and Joachim predicted that by 1260 there would appear the *Dux et Babylone*, the leader of the new age. (111)

Voegelin (1952) argues that the move created ‘a well-circumscribed symbolism by means of which Western political societies interpret the meaning of their existence’ (118):

The first of these symbols is the conception of history as a sequence of three ages, of which the third age is intelligibly the final Third Realm... The second symbol is that of the leader... The third symbol, sometimes blending into the second, is the prophet of the new age... The fourth symbol is the brotherhood of autonomous persons (e.g. monks; democratic citizens). (112)

The varying manifestations of each of these symbols is traced through a succession of disparate traditions in the centuries that followed Joachim of Flora, and scholars generally acknowledge the influence of this Joachitic symbolism on the medieval and modern imagination (Webb 2005). Norman Cohn identifies a similar lineage in (1957) *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, whereby successive generations during the medieval period were seized by the Millenarian expectation that the world would soon be miraculously transformed. As Cooper (1999) states, however, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century the medieval view of our place in the world had largely eroded, with the intramundane idea of history nurturing ‘the understanding that human being was the source of meaning in the universe, which is to say that the old world of stable, given, objective meaning created by God had come to an end’ (97). Voegelin observes of the final Third Realm:

---

<sup>16</sup> Joachim of Flora, or Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202), was an Italian monk of the Cistercian Order. Primarily a scriptural commentator, his Trinitarian history was based on a symbolic interpretation of the Book of Revelation, and its relation to the rest of the books in the Bible.

The idea of a radically immanent fulfilment grew rather slowly, in a long process that may be called “from humanism to enlightenment”; only in the eighteenth century, with the idea of progress, had the increase of meaning in history become a completely intramundane phenomenon, without transcendental irruptions. This second phase of immanentization shall be called “secularization” (118-119)

Variations of this symbol are recognizable [in] the humanistic and encyclopedist periodization of history into ancient, medieval and modern history; Turgot’s and Comte’s theory of a sequence of theological, metaphysical, and scientific phases; Hegel’s dialectic of the three stages of freedom and self-reflective spiritual fulfilment; the Marxian dialectic of the three stages of primitive communism, class society, and final communism; and finally, the National Socialist symbol of the Third Realm - though this is a special case. (112)

Voegelin observes that ‘the idea of the final realm assumes a society that will come into being but have no end, and the mystery of the stream [of being] is solved through the speculative knowledge of its goal’ (167). As a result, ‘history no longer moved in cycles, as it did with Plato and Aristotle, but acquired direction and destination’ (118); characterised by May (1991) as the Faustian straight line. In this way, ‘the political religions... rejected tension, and sought the eschatological fulfilment which Christianity promised in a post-mortal heaven within the temporal order itself’ (Nieli 1987, 335). The development is thus interpreted as the attempt to re-divinize society and to inject meaning and purpose into the fact of existence, which Voegelin summarises as follows:

[The] speculation overcame the uncertainty of faith by receding from transcendence and endowing man and his intramundane range of action with the meaning of eschatological fulfilment. In the measure in which this immanentization progressed experientially, civilizational activity became a mystical work of self-salvation. (129)

Voegelin traces these developments through the political and intellectual movements of Western civilization, with further distinctions in its varying intensity and forms across cultures explained with regard to the social-historical conditions in which such “revolutions” unfolded. Marxism, communism, fascism, and national socialism, are identified as examples of such movements, while Voegelin acknowledges that, rather than mass political movements, others ‘would more accurately be characterized as intellectual movements- for example, positivism, neo-positivism, and the variants of psychoanalysis’ (61). In one variation or another, each of these movements exhibits the symbolism outlined above, and is premised on the belief that: from a wretched world a good one must evolve historically; salvation is possible through man’s own efforts; and, this should be achieved through the construction of a formula for world salvation (64-65).

The most relevant of such movements for the current inquiry is found in Voegelin's account of the rise of scientism:

With the prodigious advancement of science since the seventeenth century, the new instrument of cognition would become... the symbolic vehicle of Gnostic truth. In the Gnostic speculation of scientism this particular variant reached its extreme when the positivist perfecter of science replaced the era of Christ by the era of Comte...

Scientism has remained to this day one of the strongest Gnostic movements in Western society; and the immanentist pride in science is so strong that even the special sciences have each left a distinguishable sediment in the variants of salvation through physics, economics, sociology, biology, and psychology. (1952, 127)

This is not intended to undermine common understandings of scientism's origins in the Enlightenment which unfolded during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but is merely an attempt to locate its deeper origins. Though Voegelin emphasises other influences on this development, such as the resurgence of Neo-Platonism during the Renaissance, he still identifies the Enlightenment as the proper historical context for understanding the rise of scientism. In particular, he notes the early influence of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and Rene Descartes, and then the key role of Auguste Comte in explicitly developing its social and political implications.

It is now relevant to turn to the remaining Joachitic symbols; the prophet, the leader, and the brotherhood of autonomous persons. First, *the prophet*, or precursor, of the new age, lends validity and conviction to the idea of a final realm; delineating the nature of the historical future and the vision of progress. In the age of secularization, this falls on the intellectual, who conceptualises the course of history as an intelligible, meaningful whole, which is accessible to human knowledge (112). This role is summarised as:

The intellectual who knows the formula for salvation from the misfortunes of the world and can predict how world history will take its course in the future. (73)

Intellectuals often fill the role of prophet, though they do not necessarily move to actualise their visions. As Aron (1957) reflects, although intellectuals may rue their inability to directly alter the course of events, they often underestimate their long term influence, and ultimately politicians are the disciples of scholars and writers. This leads to the next symbol, the *leader* of the new age, which Voegelin (1952) argues:

... had its immediate effectiveness in the movement of the Franciscan spirituals who saw in St Francis the fulfilment of Joachim's prophecy... in the period of

secularization it appears in the supermen of Condorcet, Comte, and Marx until it dominates the contemporary scene through the paracletic leaders of the new realms. (112)

Such leaders often take the form of politicians, though intellectuals (or experts) may also assume this role. Voegelin (1968) notes that in political practice these first two symbols may overlap, and often blend into one another:

In the case of Comte, for example, we doubtless have the figure of a leader before us; but, at the same time, Comte is also the intellectual who prognosticates his role as leader of world history... It is also difficult to separate the leader and intellectual in the person of Karl Marx. But in the historical form of the movement, Marx and Engels have been distinguished, by the distance of a generation, as "precursors", from Lenin and Stalin, as "leaders", of the realization of the Third Realm. (73)

Finally, there is the symbol of the 'brotherhood of autonomous persons', in which Joachim speculated that 'the church will cease to exist because the charismatic gifts that are necessary for the perfect life will reach men without administration of sacraments' (112-113). Voegelin continues:

While Joachim himself conceived the new age concretely as an order of monks, the idea of a community of the spiritually perfect who can live together without institutional authority was formulated on principle... in its secularized form it has become a formidable component in the contemporary democratic creed; and it is the dynamic core of the Marxian mysticism of the realm of freedom and the withering away of the state. (113)

While the symbol is most clearly recognizable in communism, the storyline of the NP envisages a similar withering away of the state, though this manifests in the form of liberal governance and soft control. This is complemented by a vision for the future (the speculation on the meaning of history), which is inhabited by a body of autonomous but interconnected institutions, and systems, and a citizenry of empowered knowledge workers, freely trading their skills in the global meritocracy. This vision for the future thus rests on the transfiguration of humans into human capital, a move that parallels Marx's evolution of Communist man (Voegelin 1952, 121). While it is presented as an observation rather than part of a formula for self-salvation, Fukuyama's *The End of History* (1992) demonstrates how the idea of history as an evolutionary process continues to capture the modern imagination:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. (4)

Fukuyama explicitly draws on Hegel's three-phase periodization of history, using a linear procession of epochs to develop his argument, and specifically promoting neoliberal governance as 'the best development model', for example, hailing markets as 'the engine of progress'. The origin of these ideas can be traced back to before World War II, but a key moment came when Friedrich von Hayek brought together a number of influential intellectuals to form the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947. Among its membership were eminent names such as: Ludwig von Mises, Karl Popper, Michael Polanyi, Raymond Aron, Lionel Robbins, Ludwig Erhard, and a number of American intellectuals, including the future (1976) Nobel prize winner Milton Friedman and George Stigler, leaders of the Chicago school of Economics. The Mont Pelerin Society outlined the crisis in its Statement of Aims<sup>17</sup>:

Over large stretches of the earth's surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and the voluntary groups are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power.

As Jones (2012) asserts, for these intellectuals the principal task was a political crusade to save the world from "collectivism"; 'an all-encompassing term that included Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism, New Deal liberalism and British social democracy' (4). In Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, for example, he argues that economic freedom is a necessary precondition for political freedom. Similarly, in *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek (1944) argues that, 'we have progressively abandoned freedom in economic affairs without which personal and political freedom has never existed'. Neoliberalism may thus be interpreted as 'the free market ideology based on individual liberty and limited government that connected human freedom to the actions of the rational, self-interested actor in the competitive marketplace' (Jones 2012, 2). The Mont Pelerin Society Statement of Aims emphasised the limits of its ambition:

The group does not aspire to conduct propaganda. It seeks to establish no meticulous and hampering orthodoxy. It aligns itself with no particular party. Its object is solely, by facilitating the exchange of views among minds inspired by certain ideals and broad conceptions held in common, to contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society.

Ideals are inevitably subject to development and (re)interpretation, and Aron (1957) points out that modest aspirations are often inflated into secular religions.

---

<sup>17</sup> The Mont Pelerin Society, Statement of Aims. Available at: <https://www.montpelerin.org/statement-of-aims/> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

Jones (2012) highlights how the neoliberal centre of gravity drifted from Europe to the United States in subsequent decades, and the University of Chicago in particular, where, among numerous other innovations, human capital theory was pioneered (Schultz 1963; Becker 1964). If the Mont Pelerin Society had been relatively moderate, acknowledging the value of social welfare and safety nets, these concessions were soon blown away by the strident advocacy of monetarism, deregulation, and market-based reforms. These ideas were slow to effect politics at first but were nurtured and developed through transatlantic networks and think tanks, gradually gaining momentum during the 1970s (including inroads under Carter and Callaghan) before exploding in the politics of the Reagan and Thatcher governments throughout the 1980s.

Friedman and Hayek are generally cast in the role of prophets, while Thatcher and Regan are portrayed as leading their respective societies into the neoliberal age. While Friedman was highly involved in this political adaptation, Easterly (2013) notes that Hayek denounced the way in which neoliberal ideas were being adapted in the US and UK, suggesting that its adherents had rather different objectives to his own. Ebenstein (2015), for example, identifies the resulting approach to governance and the associated policies as a form of neo-libertarianism. Jones (2012), further argues that these developments cannot be attributed solely to the emergence and rise of the new Right or the triumph of Thatcherism. Rather, he argues that it was more the about the cross-party appeal of the proposals in the context of a period of prolonged political and economic instability. As he notes, a series of economic crises throughout the 1960s and 1970s - including the first oil shock in 1973 and the collapse of industrial relations in the UK - helped to destabilise the policy consensus of the postwar years and gain legitimacy for these *new* ideas.

Since 1980, policies associated with neoliberal ideas have been spread around the globe, increasingly in the form of NPM (Verger and Curran 2014). Economists and policymakers at the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), began to rearticulate its principles within their broader mandates to pursue a series of 'structural adjustment' policies that the Economist John Williamson (1989) dubbed the 'Washington Consensus'. These adjustments included policies such as trade liberalisation, privatisation, deregulation, tax reform, and legal security for property rights. Though it represented a shift in strategy, organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, and OECD were formed with the purpose of rebuilding a

world that had been traumatised by World War II, and were committed to the spread Western liberal democracy during the Cold War (Judt 2010). At his inaugural address in 1949, Harry S. Truman introduced an initiative to give foreign aid, stating:

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery... For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people.<sup>18</sup>

Easterly (2013) notes that the approach would largely follow a ‘blank slate’ model of development, which favours improvement through conscious design. He points out that such an approach ‘fostered great potential for technocrats to create one-size fits all fixes that could be applied widely instead of having to study the historical context in each instance’ (26)<sup>19</sup>. The vaunted shift towards a global knowledge economy has merely added a new twist to this familiar storyline, reinvigorating the old impulse in the form of the ‘world education ideology’ and the concept of human capital (rendered tangible through the introduction of PISA). As Jones (2007, 325) highlights, the belief is that ‘education might contribute to an ordered, peaceful and productive world’ through: (1) the promotion of human rights, and (2) by stimulating worker productivity, economic growth and poverty reduction.

Rapplee (2012) highlights ‘the confluence of neo-liberal economics and renewed attempts to rationalize (“make scientific”) the study of education’ (8), developments which Shaker and Ruitenberg (2007) argue have come together in separate but compatible fashion. Cowen (2014) identifies the broader aim as ‘conversion’, claiming that PISA reveals an implicit need ‘to impose a worldview on the educationally recalcitrant and economically deficient’ (294). Indeed the earliest visions of global education targets were invariably embedded in mission or empire (King 2015), and this universalism relates to ‘the metaphysical faith that local western values are authoritative for all cultures and peoples’ (Grey 1997, 158). We may in turn trace this to the earlier understanding of Christianity

---

<sup>18</sup> Harry Truman’s Inaugural Address, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1949. Available online at: [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr\\_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm) (Last accessed 10.02.2016).

<sup>19</sup> True to his profound distrust of authoritarian rule, Hayek disagreed strongly with the concept of conscious design, and in a 1945 article titled, *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, he had dismantled the belief that experts could design such grand solutions to overcome society’s problems, emphasising the importance of localized knowledge and incentives, and the limitations of the ‘sciences of man’.

as a universal truth relevant to all members of the human community<sup>20</sup>, and the belief that other religions are inferior and should be replaced (Federici 2002, ).

This universalist impulse finds its ultimate expression in the concept of global governance, an existential crusade, bringing together peoples of disparate cultures, histories and traditions into one unified order at *the end of history*. I will return to consider this grand conceit at the end of the thesis.

### **Summary & implications**

The chapter identified the characteristics of the NP across two main levels. The first level used genre analysis to identify its rationale, implicit assumptions and underlying ideology. The second level searched for the deeper roots of the NP's storyline, identifying its existential undercurrent. At this level, the NP is found to be not so new after all, but rather the latest incarnation of a deep-rooted impulse. While this exploration was pursued in part for the intrinsic purpose of developing understanding of the NP's characteristics, and its relation to the field of CE more generally, it has a further instrumental purpose in the context of this thesis. In particular, it provides a basis for exploring the strategies that advocates use to overcome the issues associated with education transfer. The analysis has more immediate implications, in terms of the NP's relation to the field of CE.

Dale (2015) observes that the projects 'of all Education sub-disciplines is their desire to "improve" the world' (344), and Trohler (2015) has traced this 'educationalised culture' back to around 1800 in Europe, whereby 'an educational field was defined to solve perceived social problems' (749). Similarly, the first recorded irruption of the impulse in CE falls with St. Julienne in 1817, who was heavily influenced by the developments during the Age of Reason and the rise of scientism. That St. Julienne had no identifiable influence on the development of the field is irrelevant, and his project merely serves as an early marker of a force that has ebbed and flowed throughout the field's history. The confluence of neoliberal economics and the attempt to scientize education and political decision-making has fused into a vision for new global management, and a

---

<sup>20</sup> Cohn (1957) identifies the Book of Daniel, which was composed in the midst of the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C., as the first time that the Jewish apocalyptic vision, which had anticipated the arrival of a glorious future kingdom, was extended beyond Palestine to encompass the whole world (and its inhabitants). Specifically, he highlights the belief that 'the holy people who have hitherto groaned under the oppressor's heel, shall in turn inherit dominion over the whole Earth. This will be the culmination of history... it will have no successors' (21).

citizenry of empowered knowledge workers, freely trading their skills in the global meritocracy.

I have interpreted the storyline at the symbolic level, with its origins in the attempt to overcome the tension of existence, and to create an *eidos* of history. The modest proposals of the early *prophets* have been transmuted into a grand vision, developed and promoted by transnational organisations, and in particular the OECD, which increasingly occupies the symbolic role of *leader* of the movement (with Andreas Schleicher as its resident high priest). It is important to distinguish neoliberal politics from neoliberal policies, and many of the actors and organisations that engage with the search for policy solutions, or who actively promote the storyline at domestic and global levels, have clear profit motives (Ball 2007; 2012). That is, this reading is not intended to usurp the substantial literature that emphasises the central role of market capitalism in contemporary processes of globalization (Carney 2009). Although such actors may operate at a pragmatic level, through the myth we find our sense of identity and community, and I will return to discuss the issue of cognizance in Chapter VI.

It remains to clarify the implications of the analysis in this chapter for the upcoming sections. Voegelin (NSP) points out that ‘the eschatological interpretation of history results in a false picture of reality’ (167), violating the ‘two great principles governing existence’. In brief, he identifies these two principles as: (1) what comes into being will have an end (i.e. the rhythm of growth and decay); and, more cryptically, (2) ‘the mystery of the stream of being is impenetrable’ (167). The analysis has demonstrated how the storyline of the NP necessarily contradicts the first of these two principles in the attempt to endow history with meaning. The second of these principles relates to the construction of a system, which (a) renders the stream of being comprehensible, and which (b) therefore enables the development of formulas for self-salvation through the identification of ‘what works’.

**Chapter VI.**  
***Taming the stream of being***

**Introduction**

The previous chapter closed by asserting that the NP's storyline contradicted the two great principles governing existence, highlighting the second in particular as the focus of this chapter: the *mystery of the stream of being is impenetrable*. This chapter clarifies the nature of this problem and explores how coalition members move to overcome the inherent conflict. This is pursued in two stages, focusing on: (1) the construction of a system according on the principles contained within the NP's storyline; and, (2) the identification of 'what works', sustaining the teleological component of the story in the form of actual knowledge.

The chapter opens by relating the quest for 'what works' to the desire for actual knowledge, highlighting the connection with the analysis in Chapter V. The initial stage then investigates the construction of the calculable world, focusing on the role of the OECD as frame sponsor. This provokes reflection on the symbolic role of datasets, which render the basic conditions and contours of the storyline tangible. The second stage is pursued over a series of short sections which draw on the preliminary stage of genre analysis (Auld and Morris 2014), exploring: the *comparative method*; the *paradox of control*; and, *confronting the paradox*.

The last of these sections, *confronting the paradox*, reveals that actors are generally aware of the issues associated with the communicative purpose but nonetheless contrive to circumvent the paradox to develop absolute knowledge. The final three short sections then reflect on this tendency using the multiple theoretical perspectives, under the subtitles: *the libido dominandi*, and *the prohibition of questioning; reification, and the problem of cognizance*; and, *achieving narrative coherence*. The chapter closes with a short summary, drawing together these perspectives and clarifying the implications for the analysis in the upcoming chapters.

***Beyond philosophy: "what works" as "actual knowledge"***

Biesta (2009) argues that the concept of evidence-based practice based on 'what works' is premised on the acquisition of 'true knowledge'. Similarly Voegelin notes that the desire for self-salvation rests on the identification of actual knowledge. To clarify the distinctive nature of this ambition, Voegelin (1952) traces political science to its roots in the *politike episteme* of Plato and Aristotle.

As he notes, the science of the time was characterised as ‘a search for truth concerning the nature of the various realms of being’ (4), an ontologically oriented pursuit, which would aim to present ‘a truthful account of reality... the theoretical orientation of man in his world’, and thereby enhance ‘man’s understanding of his own position in the universe’ (5).

Voegelin contrasts this with developments in the 17<sup>th</sup> century during the age of secularization, which ‘witnessed the rise of system-building’, and the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which followed in this tradition, but which are described Germino (1971) as times of unprecedented ‘ideology-mongering’ (82). Although grounded in different traditions, Michael Oakeshott was an admirer of Voegelin’s work, and also expressed the view that such movements and ideologies represented an attempt to artificially order the world to ease human anxiety, and to escape the tension of existence. Oakeshott, however, did not focus on the consequences of pursuing such visions, but on delineating the nature of his political attitude (e.g. 1962).

Voegelin uses Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) to demonstrate the transition to system building, in which Hegel distinguishes between “love of knowledge” and “actual knowledge”, wishing to cast off the former, and to realise the latter. Voegelin (1968) reflects on this ambition:

If translated back into the Greek, into *philosophia* and *gnosis*, we then have the program of advancing from philosophy to gnosis... Philosophy is subsumed under the idea of progress in the eighteenth-century sense of the term. (30)

This is then juxtaposed with Plato’s *Phaedrus*, in which Heraclitus quizzes Socrates on the appropriate term for a ‘true thinker’:

Socrates... replies that the term *sophos*, one who knows, would be excessive: this attribute may be applied to God alone; but one might well call him *philosophos*. Thus actual knowledge is reserved to God. (31)

Voegelin continues:

If we now place Hegel’s idea of philosophizing alongside Plato’s, we shall have to conclude that while there is indeed progress in clarity and precision of knowledge of the order of being, the leap over the bounds of the finite into the perfection of actual knowledge is impossible. If a thinker attempts it, he is not advancing philosophy, but abandoning it to become a gnostic. (31)

The implications of this aspiration will be explored in the upcoming sections. Keulman (1990) notes that Voegelin’s identification of certain thinkers as “gnostic” is controversial, but maintains that ‘the term is appropriate... as long as it is distinguished from the ancient doctrine that bears its name since both have in

common the claim to absolute knowledge in the form of gnosis and the power deriving from knowledge' (36). While the substance of the category remained the same, Voegelin himself moved away from the designation in later writings, subsequently referring to Hegel as indulging in forms of alchemy and sorcery, among other transfigurative practices (Nieli 1987).

The reasons underlying Voegelin's palpable distaste for the practice will be clarified later in the chapter. Moreover, while Hegel is presented as an example, the substance of the category is related to the practice of system building more generally. The impulse is necessitated by the nature of the storyline and the emphasis on self-salvation in the form of 'absolute knowledge'. This may in turn be related to the sweeping changes that were underway during the period, whereby faith in transcendent reality had to be translated into the language of human reason. Again, it is important to note that we do not have to accept the designation of actors as 'gnostics', but merely the essence of the category, and the implications for comparative research in the context of the storyline.

The focus here falls first on the construction of a system that renders the stream of being comprehensible, and therefore amenable (in principle) to management, or control. Next I will move on to explore how the NP overcomes the issues associated with transfer to develop actual knowledge within this system of management.

### ***The calculable world: (Re)constructing the cosmos***

I have identified international organisations, and the OECD in particular, as the primary frame sponsors. Here I focus on the initial move to construct a system according to the principles of the storyline. Voegelin (1968) asserts that the aspiration for actual knowledge requires the construction of a 'second reality'<sup>21</sup>, while Biesta (2010) notes that much of the discussion about 'what works' operates on the assumption of a closed, deterministic system. Education is an open system, in that it is characterised by a degree of interaction with its environment. In this respect, it is unlike the natural sciences, in which the concept of controlled experiments and the language of 'what works' was first introduced. At a basic level, this problem may be overcome by introducing measurements that support the story logic. Simons (2015) points out how the desire to use scientific evidence to improve society has influenced the fabric of society itself:

---

<sup>21</sup> This *second reality* is described as an 'imaginary reality', one which screens 'the first reality of common experience'. The connection with the 'neoliberal imaginary' should be immediately apparent.

The field of education being approached as a laboratory is not merely the result of a kind of epistemological breakthrough. This approach is not possible without transforming the world at once in a controlled setting with monitoring systems in order to be able to collect evidence and find proof on what works (better). (728)

This relates to the sociology of measurement, which Gorur and Wu (2015) state may be used to ‘draw attention to the social and instrumental nature of measurement’ (651). Gorur’s (2014; 2015) analysis of PISA and the OECD’s *Education at a Glance* explores the development of the measurements, and how they are used to construct a ‘calculable world’. This concept is based on the assumption that measurements are both ‘productive’ and ‘performative’ (Woolgar 1991; Gorur 2014), and therefore operate as a ‘world-making’ technology. In this way, the world is changed in order to render it comprehensible (Scott 1998). Knorr Cetina (2007) explores this process across a number of fields, arguing that such indicator systems are productive of global societies, and describing them as the ‘machineries of knowledge construction’ (364).

As Gorur (2015) notes, when we view the construction of comparative measurements not just as imperfect, but as a world-making process, critiquing is ‘not just an epistemological exercise, but an ontological and political one’ (593). International surveys do not provide an objective representation of educational performance, but rather create a version of the “truth” (Pongratz 2006). A key insight into the process is presented by Woolgar (1991), who highlights the core supposition of this process is the existence of a transcendental object to be measured. Gorur (2014) adopts this starting point to examine the concept of ‘equity’ and how it is constructed within the PISA data. While the OECD’s mandate and proactive marketing strategies have undoubtedly contributed to the rise of the PISA relative to other indicators (e.g. TIMSS & PIRLS), a key feature of its success is the claim that the indicators represent a universal benchmark of education ‘quality’.

As Kamens and McNeely (2010) note, ‘in a world where national educational systems are viewed as unique in structure, history, and purpose, international testing would have little plausibility’ (8). Stone (1988) distinguishes between *natural communities*, in which ‘people... interact regardless of whether they are being counted’, and *artificial or statistical communities*, in which ‘people have no relationship other than the shared characteristic that determined the count’ (135). While the distinction is ‘fuzzy’, Stone claims that ‘much of counting is an effort to identify a statistical community in order to demonstrate common interests and thereby stimulate the creation of a natural community’ (135).

The concept of cognitive governance is therefore a necessary precondition for epistemological governance, which commentators commonly identify as a key aspect of the OECD's activity (e.g. Sellar and Lingard 2013). The significance of this claim may be clarified with regard to the conditions laid out in the storyline, which the OECD uses to position PISA. I here provide an example to illustrate the process. In *Lessons from PISA for Japan* (2012), the OECD asserts that 'values and preferences evolve and education systems must change to accommodate them' (23). The context for this claim is presented in the introductory section, titled *A changing yardstick for education success*, which explains the changes to the ordinary world:

Rapid globalisation and modernisation are posing new and demanding challenges to individuals and societies alike. Increasingly diverse and interconnected populations, rapid technological change in the workplace and in everyday life, and the instantaneous availability of vast amounts of information are just a few of the factors contributing to these new demands. In a globalised world, people compete for jobs not just locally but internationally. In this integrated worldwide labour market, highly-paid workers in wealthier countries are competing directly with people with much the same skills in lower-wage countries. The same is true for people with low skills. The competition among countries now revolves around the quality of their human capital.

High-wage countries will find that they can only maintain their relative wage levels if they can develop a high proportion of such knowledge workers and keep them in their work force. Increasingly, such work will require very high skills levels and will demand increasing levels of creativity and innovation.

This is not a description of one possible future, but of the economic dynamics that are now in play.

In this context, governments need to create education systems that are accessible to everyone, not just a favoured few; that are globally competitive in quality; that provide people from all classes a fair chance to get the right kind of education to succeed; and to achieve all this at a price that the nation can afford. The aim is no longer just to provide a basic education for all, but to provide an education that will make it possible for everyone to become "knowledge workers".

The implication is that the yardstick for educational success is no longer simply improvement against national standards, but against the best-performing education systems worldwide. (16)

This short excerpt perfectly captures the projected conditions of the ordinary world and the vision for the future, focusing the storyline to promote a new yardstick for education success. This new yardstick introduces the concept of a universal standard of 'quality' - the transcendental object. Education is defined entirely in economic terms, with regard to the instrumental role that it plays in developing both human capital and empowered knowledge workers. Education is therefore of a high quality in as far as its outcomes demonstrably contribute

towards this greater end. Kallo (2009) highlights the large number of publications that the OECD releases on 'globalisation, economics of education, and human and social capital' (182). For example, Schleicher (2014) asserts that:

According to one estimate, if all 15-year-olds in the OECD area attained at least level 2 in the PISA mathematics assessment, they would contribute over USD 200 trillion in additional economic output over their working lives. (21)

The source of this estimate is another OECD report (2010a). A more recent OECD report, *Universal Basic Skills* (2015) asserts the significant economic gains to be made by countries at all levels:

24% of 15-year olds in the United States do not successfully complete even the basic Level 1 PISA tasks. If the United States were to ensure that all students meet the goal of universal basic skills, the economic gains could reach over USD 27 trillion in additional income for the American economy over the working life of these students. (10)

While it is difficult for Ghana to meet the goal of universal basic skills any time soon, if it did, it would see a gain over the lifetime of its children born today that, in present value terms, is 38 times its current GDP. This is equivalent to tripling Ghana's discounted future GDP every four years during the working life of those students with improved skills. For lower-middle income countries, the discounted present value of future gains would still be 13 times current GDP and would average out to a 28% higher GDP over the next 80 years. (10)

These unequivocal statements suggest that improving student outcomes will translate directly into significant economic gains, offering systems a glimpse of the idealised future - to be achieved over the lifetime of their children born today. By positioning PISA data as a reliable indicator of an individual's ability to 'meet real life challenges', and as a proxy for a nation's stock of human capital, the OECD argues not just for the existence of this transcendental object, but that the organisation (and the organisation alone) holds it in its beneficent hands. Education systems are thus directly commensurable, and PISA is positioned as the world's 'premier yardstick' for education quality (OECD 2013, 11). Focusing on technical issues with the production of the data, or the general validity of these claims, rather misses the point, and reinforces the notion that there is indeed a transcendental object *out there* that may be captured.

The move represents an initial step towards constructing a system according to the principles of an ideological vision. By isolating and quantifying this universal good, and positioning it as the goal of reform, the stream of being is thus rendered comprehensible and education "quality" - the one truth - is presented as the gateway to the idealised future. Gorur's (2014) interviews with policy analysts working at the OECD revealed the way in which difficult

philosophical questions, such as what constitutes ‘quality’ and ‘equity’, were acknowledged and then effectively ‘boxed up’ to enable the project to proceed in a way that would be useful to policymakers. Regarding equity, one OECD analyst explained:

It is a very philosophical issue and we are the OECD... [we did not want to get] involved in a huge philosophical discussion on what is equity and what it is not, so we went for definitions that can be defined with our indicators and that are simple to understand and clear... After looking at the research, the philosophical research literature, we decided that we couldn’t go in there. (in Gorur 2014, 62)

Any research that questions *what* (e.g. Biesta 2010; Valverde 2014) is measured, or *how* it is measured (e.g. Taht and Must 2014; Moss and Goldstein 2014), or which queries this interpretation of human capital theory (e.g. Wolf 2004; Lauder et al. 2012) is studiously ignored (see Hopmann and Brinek 2006). Thus the segments of reality that are omitted from the system are suppressed to sustain the coherence of the story and to establish a concrete measure of “quality”. In the context of technocratic governance, the layperson does not know how their universe is to be conceptually maintained and the reality of the object must be taken it on good faith. Voegelin (NSP) argues that the meaning of history ‘is created by treating a symbol of faith as if it were a proposition concerning an object of immanent experience’ (120). He claims:

When man creates the cosmos of political order, he analogically repeats the divine creation of the cosmos. The analogical repetition is not an act of futile imitation, for in repeating the cosmos man participates, in the measure allowed to his existential limitations, in the creation of cosmic order itself. (Voegelin 1952, 16)

The benchmark provides the narrative with clear direction, reconstructing the cosmos and providing a common point of orientation across diverse systems. This ultimate standard is translated down through levels of governance, replicated in the organisation of national systems of performance management, and shaping the framework within which we experience and make sense of reality. This is the essence of performativity, which Ball (2012) asserts encompasses ‘the work that performance management systems do on the subjectivities of practitioners... [and which] is enacted through measures and targets against which we are expected to position ourselves’ (31). Gorur (2015) likens PISA to a Delphic oracle, delivering its predictions from a mountain top, with its message interpreted and disseminated by a community of devoted elders. May (1991) provides further source for reflection:

In Europe the community's myth is symbolically emblazoned by the churches in the towns and cities... These Biblical myths led the person gazing up in them to the adoration of the Most High God and other Christian myths which everyone in the village knew by heart. The church was there for all to see, the custodian of the heart and spirit of the community, the central symbol around which its myths were woven. (51)

Just as church spires once acted as a central symbol for the Christian myths, reminding citizens of their place in the cosmos and their journey towards perfection in the next life, so the storyline of the NP is woven around the matrix of numbers that dominate the skyline, allowing us to orient ourselves towards the idealised future that lies just beyond the horizon, measuring progress relative to other individuals, communities, and systems, and adjusting behaviour, and policies, according to the proclamations of the high priests of change. Thus the symbolic role of comparative datasets emerges, which, apart from providing the basis for cultivating a natural community, become the central pillar of our civic theology. This common orientation does not necessarily lead to homogenisation, as the constellations in the night sky are interpreted with regard to local myths.

While this foundation relates to the story of decline-improvement directly, it also provides a basis for developing the story of control by: (1) distilling complex social systems into a comprehensible format; and, (2) setting the foundation for developing actual knowledge of 'what works' in the best-performing systems. Voegelin argues that the aspiration leads to a fundamental conflict with reality, for 'actual knowledge' is unattainable. I have already highlighted the omission of philosophical questions to enable the construction of the calculable world. Faith in the teleological component requires the further distillation of complex conditions into straightforward and generalizable causal relationships, supporting the story of control. To this end, I first outline the comparative method that characterises the NP, before proceeding to clarify the nature of the consequent paradox and how coalition members attempt to overcome it.

### ***Initial inquiry into the NP's comparative method***

Again, the initial phase of inquiry focused on the four key texts identified in the preceding section, and details of this phase of analysis can be found in Auld and Morris (2014). This preliminary stage outlines basic elements of the comparative method, and a more detailed overview of the varying moves and strategies used in the overall storyline will be developed in Chapter VII, along with an elaboration of methods of data collection and analysis. Three basic features were identified at this stage. The first of these can be traced to the NP's origins in SER, which

‘moved towards large surveys that sought to locate ‘effective schools’ and to deduce ‘what works’ from the correlates and characteristics of such schools’ (Fitz-Gibbon 2000, 75). This gives the first step:

*(a) The NP focuses on “high-performing” systems - as defined by comparative educational assessment surveys - and their correlates*

The second feature involves the focus of the selected correlates, and can be expressed thus:

*(b) Causality is located entirely within education systems’ practices and structures*

To recommend that ‘best practices’ might be transferred to produce system improvement, aspects of education systems’ practices and structures must be prioritized over other potential causal factors. Factors outside school systems are acknowledged, but any causal influence is treated independently of - and subordinated to - that of school practices and structures. Researchers must therefore operate on the assumption of a closed system. This focus of causal explanations is necessary to sustain the story of control, and represents a key feature of the NP’s *policy core beliefs*.

Having used the correlates of “high-performing” systems to locate causality within school practices and structures, a further methodological step remains:

*(c) Policy recommendations are promoted through syllogistic reasoning*

This reasoning takes the form: Countries X and Y perform well in cross-national comparative assessment surveys and exhibit educational system feature A. Country Z underperforms in cross-national comparative assessment surveys and does not exhibit educational system feature A. Therefore, if country Z were to adopt educational system feature A, its educational outcomes (and economic performance) would be improved (adapted from Morris 1998, 4). This syllogism presents a further assumption, adapted from Hamilton’s critique of SER (1998, 15):

*(d) Causal factors/processes are independent, absolute and universal. That is, they do not interfere with one another, they exert a constant and predictable effect, and they are not influenced by context.*

These assumptions are necessary if the NP is to fulfil its ambition in absolute terms, and involve two distinct stages. The first requires the identification and isolation of a specific system practice or structure from a complex array of causal mechanisms, one that is directly related, or can be linked, to student outcomes

on educational surveys. The second involves recommending the transfer of any identified causal feature into another context, with the expectation that it will exert a constant and similar effect. To sustain this, and drawing on Biesta (2010), a further assumption is required:

*(e) Education is a closed deterministic system, and is governed by a mechanistic ontology.*

The initial move to support this assumption has already been revealed in the introduction of comparative datasets, rendering society comprehensible and thus amenable to management, in principle. The subsequent attempt to identify education 'best practices' forces advocates to confront the paradox of control directly.

### ***Clarifying the paradox of control***

As the man said, for every complex problem there's a simple solution, and it's wrong.

Dr Casaubon, in *Foucault's Pendulum* (Umberto Eco 1988, 265)

The story of control operates on the assumption of a closed system and a mechanistic ontology. The first step to support this supposition lies in translating social reality into a calculable format, establishing relative positions and a barometer for progress. Evidence of 'what works' in high-performing systems then provides substance to the storyline's teleological component through the concept of self-salvation. Carvalho and Costa (2014) claim that the compelling combination of 'universalism and scientism' inherent in PISA 'brings the comfort of legitimizing policy problems and solutions with the blessing of putative universal, independent, expert knowledge' (7). As Lemke (1995) notes, 'technocratic discourse's model for argument is based on positivistic science's claims to identify true causes' (11). This reflects the assumptions outlined above.

Education research deals with issues that are 'trans-scientific' (Weinberg 1974), in that they have an inherent moral component, studying them is too expensive or impractical to replicate, or, the current focus, the complex nature of the subject matter precludes the identification of clear (and generalizable) lines between cause and effect. The consensus in the philosophy of science since at least the 1970s has been that the social sciences will not achieve the apparent exactitude of the natural sciences (Shaker and Ruitenberg 2007). Fischer (1993)

points out that ‘any particular set of facts could- at least arguably- be consistent with a variety of theories’ (32). Advocates must therefore distil explanations into the form of straightforward problem-solutions that can be used to advocate reforms. As Ramalingam (2013) notes, the ‘simplification is seductive because it sidesteps fuzziness and suggests a programme of action’ (22).

Goldstein (1993) argues that ‘there may, on occasion, be no straightforward answer to a simple question’ (180). In cases where a modal response is required, any straightforward answer rests on ‘a crude philosophical misconception’, which he terms: ‘the fallacy of the simple question’ (179). As Cobley (2014) notes, ‘even the most “simple” of stories is embedded in a network of relations that is sometimes astounding in its complexity’ (2). Even in the case that an absolute causal relationship could be identified and extracted from its broader conditions, advocating policy transfer relies on a misapplication of syllogistic reasoning. Biesta (2010) points out that the attempt to develop ‘knowledge about the world *in function of* our interventions... concerns relationships between actions and consequences that have happened in the past... with *no guarantee that what has been possible in the past will also happen in the future*’ (496), let alone in different contexts.

In seeking to present straightforward recommendations coalition members must therefore confront a basic paradox, namely:

*Whilst identifying policies for transfer relies on straightforward and transferrable causal claims that focus on school systems’ practices and structures, the reasons underlying different levels of pupil achievement are inherently complex, explanations are conditional, and such explanations cannot be used to make the generalizable causal connections necessary to support policy transfer.*

The source of this paradox is well-established in the social science literature, and is nested in basic understandings of causality and the complex nature of social interactions. Moreover, as Hyslop-Marginson and Naseem (2007) note, this is a problem of ontology, and as such cannot be overcome through methodological innovation. And yet, authority for action requires advocates to provide straightforward answers in the form of actual knowledge. The proliferation of publications purporting to have identified policy lessons, and the prominence of ‘international evidence’ in policy debates and documents around the world, suggests that advocates have not been discouraged by this fundamental paradox. This observation was used to develop the second main research question:

*How do researchers overcome the issues that are associated with the identification and transfer of education 'best practices'?*

While this question will be addressed in more detail in an upcoming section, I will briefly present the initial stages of analysis, the findings of which were used to guide the analysis of a larger corpus of texts. Initial reflection on the issue suggested a number of possibilities: (1) researchers were not aware of the issues, i.e. they did not have a background in comparative education or the social sciences; (2) evidence was based on instances of careless scholarship, i.e. advocates had relevant training, or experience, but for whatever reason they had not carried it through; or, (3) researchers were aware of the issues but nonetheless contrived to circumvent them in order to fulfil their communicative purpose. A final, though unlikely, possibility must also be conceded: (4) researchers had successfully overcome the issues, developing theory and methods that tamed complexity and enabled the identification of generalizable, causal inferences.

### ***Confronting the paradox***

In this world one is seldom reduced to make a selection between two alternatives. There are as many varieties of conduct and opinion as there are turns of feature between an aquiline nose and a flat one. You will, therefore, permit me to concede your entire argument, and yet contrive means to escape your dilemma.

*(Werther, in The Sorrows of Young Werther, Goethe)*

In each of the reports, the inclusion of caveats indicated that researchers were generally well aware of the issues, and did not accept the necessary assumptions regarding the nature of causality. Nonetheless, they proceeded to deliver the communicative purpose. The analysis duly focused more closely on how advocates reconciled their knowledge of what was theoretically possible with the demands of the genre. The initial stages of inquiry feature in Auld and Morris (2014), and illustrative excerpts have been incorporated into the main section of analysis in Chapter VII, which extends and nuances the findings with regard to a broader corpus of texts. The strategies were summarised in two preliminary categories.

Omission and silences:

*The lines of enquiry of the NP are defined by the nature of its ambition, which demands clear, deterministic lines between cause and effect and the identification and isolation of specific, casually significant system features. Analysts will necessarily ignore or downplay both (i) cases that are not consistent with*

*emphasized trends, and (ii) practical/theoretical issues that may interfere with the genre's ambition.*

Dealing with critics:

*The NP deals with critics by acknowledging the methodological issues by including caveats and then marginalising them when drawing recommendations, by downplaying their significance or by restating them as of secondary importance. Crisis rhetoric and appeals to pragmatism may be used to warn against the perils of inaction and/or to promote a 'discourse of derision'.*

When confronted by the paradox inherent in the ambition, researchers did not recalibrate their aims, but rather contrived to marginalise the issues, and to preempt and undermine critique. This discovery merely underlines the problem, and prompted the question of *why* a researcher would contrive to circumvent reality and suppress critique in this way. The question marked a key point in the development of the thesis. Whereas combining the schema of plot structure with principles from *move analysis* offered a method that would address the question of *how* researchers developed persuasive texts a clear and structured way, it offered little interpretive value with regard to this apparent psychological aberration.

Namely, I was reminded of Voegelin's question: *Why do they refuse to apperceive what they apperceive quite well?* In an attempt to understand this pattern of strategies, I turned to: (1) the political science literature (i.e. ACF and NPF), which provided guidelines for interpreting the strategies at the level of advocacy and persuasion. These theories were introduced primarily over Chapters III and IV, and I return to them below (achieving narrative coherence). At the next level (in Chapter V), I began to search for the deeper roots of the storyline, focusing on its symbolism and mythic themes. This second level took the inquiry into (2) the philosophy of history and of consciousness.

These perspectives operate at different levels and present the opportunity for more nuanced reflection on the analysis of the featured texts. I here clarify the insights offered by each of these perspectives, under the section subheadings: *The libido dominandi & the prohibition of questions; reification and the problem of cognizance; and, achieving narrative coherence.*

### ***The libido dominandi & the prohibition of questions***

Why do they expressly prohibit anybody to ask questions concerning the sectors of reality they have excluded from their horizon?

The section began by identifying ‘what works’ as the desire for ‘actual knowledge’. I argued that this process begins by constructing a calculable world, providing substance to the storyline. I subsequently identified a series of assumptions which are necessary to support the storyline, but which are in conflict with common understandings of the nature of social reality. The initial phase of move analysis suggested that advocates were aware of the issues, but nonetheless contrived to circumvent them. It is now apt to return to Voegelin’s reflections on the desire for ‘actual knowledge’.

Voegelin continues using the instruments of classical philosophy as a benchmark for inquiry, specifically the *politike episteme* of ancient Greece. This science, which was ontologically oriented, is then contrasted with the rise of system building that characterises western modernity<sup>22</sup>. Influential thinkers such as Marx and Hegel are subjected to analysis, and in each case Voegelin demonstrates: (1) there is a fundamental rupture between the system and reality, (2) the thinker expresses awareness of this rupture, but (3) then contrives to obscure this rupture, to prohibit questioning, and to thereby maintain the internal coherence of the system and preserve the vision. Voegelin (1968) reflects:

This is not a matter of resistance to analysis... it does not involve those who cling to opinions by reason or emotion, or those who engage in debate in naïve confidence of the rightness of their opinions... Rather, we are confronted here with persons who know that, and why, their opinions cannot stand up under critical analysis and who therefore make the prohibition of the examination of their premises part of their dogma. (16)

Later, Voegelin clarifies the connection with the foregoing analysis:

An essential connection exists between the suppression of questions and the construction of a system. Whoever reduces being to a system cannot permit questions that invalidate systems as a form of reasoning. (33)

The basic phenomenon is identified as the ‘attempt by ideologists to paper over the complexity and mysteriousness of reality by achieving conceptual clarity within their systems’ (Franz 2005, 39). The attempt to obscure complexity has

---

<sup>22</sup> The reader may well question whether Plato’s Republic does not also present the same kind of utopian vision at which Voegelin directs his critique. Voegelin maintained that this is based on a misunderstanding of the Republic, and its place in Plato’s broader body of work. He notes that “utopia” rests on a false translation (of *ariste politeia*), and states that Plato aims to unfold ‘the perennial principle of political science: That the right order of the soul through philosophy furnishes the standard for the right order of society’ (Voegelin 1957, 227). The ideal regime (the *best* society) laid out in the Republic is not perfect, that it degenerates into even less perfect forms, and ultimately, into tyranny. That is, all regimes are imperfect, and all regimes degenerate due to imperfections in human nature. Thus they conform to the rhythm of growth and decay, the fate of all things under the sun.

already been highlighted in the construction of the calculable world, with OECD analysts explicitly acknowledging the suppression of philosophical questions to ensure its internal coherence. I also highlighted research that questions the OECD's interpretation of human capital theory, which is consistently ignored by the organisation. I will return to discuss the implications later in the thesis. Voegelin suggests that when the ambition for absolute knowledge is thwarted by 'the mystery of the stream of being', the non-recognition of reality becomes a first principle:

In the clash between system and reality, reality must give way. The swindle is justified by reference to the demands of the historical future, which the ...thinker has speculatively projected in his system. (Voegelin 1968, 34)

Voegelin asserts that the question of why a thinker would *consciously* contradict reality and prohibit questioning in this way - the 'intellectual swindle' - cannot be answered on the level of theoretic argument, as the phenomenon has *clearly* moved beyond reason. Elsewhere, Voegelin (1952) argues that 'the phenomenon of a dream world, based on definite principles... could hardly be possible as a historical mass phenomenon unless it were rooted in some experiential drive' (167). Searching for its psychological origins, he draws on the work of Nietzsche to identify it as the *libido dominandi*: 'the will to power', or 'the will to dominion'.

Movements that attempt to transform the structure of reality in this way are grounded in the belief that humans can escape the *metaxy*, reordering the constitution of being to enable the creation of societies that eliminate the tension of existence. Again, this is traced to the desire to overcome the mystery of the stream of being, and to arrogate the possibility of self-salvation for mankind. In this respect, it extends beyond literary transmission to the tension that inheres in the human condition. As Voegelin (1952) states, the phenomenon may reveal:

... an uncertainty [in the order of being] perhaps so hard to bear that it may be acknowledged sufficient motive for the creation of fantasy assurances. (81)

In other words, the consciousness of certainty is sufficient to eclipse any intellectual misgivings. This diagnosis is reflected in contemporary portrayals of scientism. Hyslop-Marginson and Naseem (2007) argue that 'at the heart of modern science and the rise of empirical research is the understanding and aspiration that humans can shape their own destiny, rather than be fatalistically dependent on external powers' (vii), while Chafetz (1996) argues that 'our intellectual pride does not allow us to imagine that our world functions by principles that remain utterly beyond our control or comprehension' (101). Rather

than reappraise fundamental assumptions and the goal to which our activity is directed, researchers try to tease ‘some order out of chaos, to weed out some threads of causation from very complex situations’ (Ramalingam 2013, 72). Marcuse (1966) presents similar reflections on the tradition of Western thought, which is guided by the idea of Reason, and which he states has directed its logic at:

... the antagonistic structure of reality, and of thought trying to understand reality. The world of immediate experience—the world in which we find ourselves living—must be comprehended, transformed, even subverted in order to become that which it really is. (Marcuse 1966, 123)

While these analyses identify a similar phenomenon, they do not search for the origins of the impulse. Sandoz (1971) claims that the *libido dominandi* can penetrate entire societies, evoking the claim that ‘there [is] a serious, perennial, spiritual problem that somehow, in the modern era, [has] risen to the level of social and political mass phenomenon’ (Roszbach 2005, 87). Cowen (2014) makes a similar diagnosis, highlighting the ‘*will to power* of earlier generations of comparative educationists’ (293 italics added) who had laboured over the development of a science of CE.

Though the majority of coalition members are not involved in the construction of a system at the point of origin, they must nonetheless confront this tension when engaging with the research ambition. Moreover, analysts involved in the construction of the datasets and the identification of ‘best practices’ may have pragmatic incentives (e.g. professional, economic) to obscure inconvenient segments of reality. This relates to the influence of the storyline on the individual, and therefore the field, and provokes deeper reflection on actor cognizance.

### ***Reification, and the problem of cognizance***

To aid interpretation of the pattern of strategies emerging from the analysis, I turned to Voegelin’s critique of Western modernity, in which he moves to the psychological level. While this aids reflection on the phenomenon, there remain clear limitations on inference regarding the nature of individual actors’ experience of reality, a point which must be acknowledged when focusing on the existential aspect of *homo narrans*. This concern relates to Rappleye’s (2015) call to utilise insights from phenomenology. May (1994) clarifies the nature of the problem from

the perspective of existential psychology, highlighting the chasm between what is *abstractly true*, and what is *existentially real* for the given living person<sup>23</sup>.

Kariel (1967) reflects on the political relevance of behavioural and existential psychology, concluding that the behavioural strand (which, among others, has influenced the assumptions in NPF and ACF) may have more practical relevance, in terms of its ambition to categorise, to predict, and to influence patterns of behaviour. However, he ultimately acknowledges the value of the existential strand, asserting that, 'making vivid the partisan nature of our intellectual preoccupations, it stimulates the political imagination', and that it may help guard against 'the fallacy of closure, [and] of regarding [our] findings as the whole of possible reality' (342). I explore the issue here with regard to the problem of cognizance.

Voegelin (1968) points out that 'none of the movements cited began as a mass movement; all derived from intellectuals and small groups', arguing that many of these intellectual movements have 'if not the form, at least the success of political mass movements, in that their theories and jargons have shaped the thinking of millions of people in the Western world, very often without their being aware of it' (62). In such cases, he argues that the 'speculation of a creative thinker has culturally degenerated and become the dogma of a mass movement' (ibid. 24). These dogma, viewed as unproblematic, then become the starting point for subsequent analysis, and undergird social and political behaviour.

We might then infer that individuals who have been socialised into a given system of order, and in which the necessary legitimating apparatus are in place, simply think differently about the nature of social reality and the mechanisms in place to maintain that reality. In such cases, Voegelin (1952) identifies the tendency towards voluntary self-censorship, whereby 'the faithful member of a movement will not touch literature that is apt to argue against, or show disrespect for, his cherished beliefs' (140). In such cases, the system is accepted as the reality *par excellence*, and the prohibition of questions has become effective at the pragmatic level of action.

Again, this may be interpreted at the existential level, whereby 'the symbols express the experience that man is fully man by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence, by virtue of his participation in

---

<sup>23</sup> As with A. Schutz's phenomenological sociology, and the extension of his project through the work of S. Berger and T. S. Luckman, the various strands of existential psychology were inspired by Husserl's phenomenology. Like Voegelin, however, May focuses analysis at the existential level, exploring the relevance of myths in contemporary culture and politics.

the *xynon*<sup>24</sup>, the common' (Voegelin 1952, 27-28). As May (1991) argues, 'to be a member of one's community is to share its myths' (45). The idea is reflected in 'organisational culture' (Mumby and Clair 2009), and also the NPF, which emphasises the primacy of groups and networks, whereby, 'people look to their trusted relationships and associations to help them make sense of the world' (McBeth, Jones et al. 2014, 233). This is particularly important given that individuals engaging with the NP often work for large organisations and/or corporations that are committed to advancing the logic of the storyline at different levels.

Individuals may hold different views in private to those that are necessary in their professional roles (Marginson and Rhoades 2002), evoking the claim that 'paradigms' are not fixed, but rather assembled to deal with the situation at hand (Wendel 2008). Goffman (1959) makes the distinction between those who actually believe in their role, and those who perform a role for instrumental purposes, referring to these attitudes as *sincere* and *cynical* respectively. In time, however, even cynical actors may redefine themselves according to their performative role, participating in the *xynon*. As Mills (2000) notes, 'legitimations that are publicly effective often become, in due course, effective as personal motives' (37). Hajer (1993) develops this, focusing on how individuals push their beliefs back out into the world:

Actors who have been socialized to work within the frame of such an institutionalized discourse will use their positions to persuade or force others to interpret and approach reality according to their institutionalized insights and convictions. (46)

This is also anticipated by Voegelin, and the range of strategies used to curb or eliminate deviance from one's worldview be explored in Chapter VII. Any individual engaging with the communicative purpose will inevitably be forced to reconcile its inherent conflict and, regardless of motivation, the cumulative effect of the strategies will be the same. In time, the initial moves to subvert reality may be internalized and reified, whereby the construct and the associated assumptions are viewed as unproblematic, or are justified by the exigencies of the frame. The question of what is *existentially real* for any given actor will remain largely beyond the scope of the analysis in this thesis, though the interviews conducted to aid the analysis in Chapter VIII open up space for reflection by taking the inquiry to the micro-level.

---

<sup>24</sup> This usage of the *xynon* is taken from Heraclitus' analysis of public and private consciousness, termed *xynon* and *idiotēs* respectively.

I now turn to the NPF and ACF, which focus on the communicative aspect of *homo narrans*, providing a basis for interpreting the pattern of strategies used to achieve narrative coherence in terms of what is *abstractly true*.

### ***Achieving narrative coherence***

The preliminary phase of genre analysis indicated that advocates are generally aware of the paradox of control and yet contrive to circumvent the dilemma. I have argued that this may be pursued at an unconscious level, whereby the construct is viewed as unproblematic, or necessary, and actors understand the storyline as a transcendent truth. Such actors may be described as *true believers*. Other actors may operate at a pragmatic level, and the ACF emphasises that it is necessary to consider individual and organisational agendas and/or welfare when considering motivation (Sabatier 1998). That is, actors may be *agnostic* or *sceptical* of the construct, but have other incentives to circumvent the paradox and to marginalise issues. Regardless of motivation, or what is *existentially real* for a given individual, actors are united by the requirement to develop a straightforward narrative.

Earlier, I highlighted a number of criteria for narrative quality, including narrative probability (encompassing congruence and unity) and fidelity, and the idea that the story must have a recognisable beginning, middle, and end, as well as a sense of moral or intellectual conclusion. A further range of strategies are used to marshal complex systems into a coherent story that cultivates a sense of inevitability about the proposed solution. Aside from the NPF's emphasis on narrative cognition, a range of other assumptions can be used to inform the analysis, namely: *identity-protective cognition*, *selective exposure*, and *confirmation and disconfirmation bias*. Again, this relates to the beliefs which are implicit in the storyline, and which were uncovered in Chapters V and VI. The relevant beliefs can be organised according to the ACF's hierarchical structure, and summarised as:

- Deep core: *closed system and mechanistic ontology (i.e. calculable world)*
- Policy core: *generalizable causal relationships, located within school systems' practices and structures*
- Secondary: *specific policy preferences (variable)*

The deep core and policy core beliefs implicit in the storyline force advocates to confront the stated paradox, while the promotion of a specific policy preference requires the advocate to streamline complexity. The direct promotion of a specific

policy preference is thus constrained by the conflict inherent in the higher-order beliefs. Sabatier (ibid.) clarifies the implications:

Coalition members will resist information suggesting their deep core or policy core beliefs may be invalid and/or unattainable, and usually will use formal policy analyses to buttress and elaborate those beliefs (or attack their opponent's views). (104-105)

This concept of buttressing can be nuanced by drawing on Potter (1996), who distinguishes between 'offensive rhetoric' and 'defensive rhetoric'. Offensive rhetoric may be used to protect core beliefs by undermining alternate perspectives and/or critics (McBeth, Shanahan et al. 2007, 89), and to develop a 'discourse of derision' (Ball 1990). In contrast, defensive rhetoric is used to resist or marginalize critique, consolidating the legitimacy of the ambition, and allowing researchers to deliver the communicative purpose.

I argue that actors primarily focus on the construction of coherent stories, rather than defending the implicit causal beliefs directly. Other actors, who are more cognizant of - and sensitive to - the issues may develop additional strategies to justify and support these narrative strategies. Moreover, as individuals develop straightforward stories and buttress deep core and policy core beliefs in an attempt to deliver of the communicative purpose, they implicitly (re)interpret the nature of social reality.

### **Summary**

The chapter related the quest for 'what works' to the desire for 'actual knowledge', demonstrating how the construction of the calculable world renders society comprehensible and therefore amenable (in principle) to management, and control. I then highlighted the paradox of control that is inherent in the desire to establish 'what works' within this system, and highlighted advocates' response to the problem. This initial stage of analysis illustrated that advocates contrived to circumvent reality rather than reappraise their ambition, provoking reflection across a number of levels, and drawing on political science, and the philosophy of history and of consciousness.

In the next chapter, these perspectives are combined to develop understanding of the coalition's *modus operandi*. Whereas Voegelin's analysis focuses at the level of original inception, and the construction of a conceptual system, he also notes that this can descend into the dogma of a mass movement, whereby the system is viewed as a transcendent truth, and the varying moves are pursued unconsciously, or 'in good faith'. Though actors

inevitably operate in different contexts and with varying levels of cognizance, the concept of identity-protective cognition and strategic buttressing focus on the same defensive process, and are symptoms of a resistance to destabilizing forces.

This may in turn be related to the function of myths, which underpin our personal identity, and sense of community. The processes of buttressing may be interpreted as a resistance to the tension that inheres in the broader storyline, and existence more generally, rather than as an attempt to preserve a clearly defined set of beliefs. This does not preclude the possibility of self-interested, and/or cynical actors operating at a pragmatic level, and I emphasise the limits of the analysis in terms of its ability to determine what is *existentially real* for a given actor. Regardless of cognizance and motivation, the cumulative effect of the strategies will be the same.

These overlapping perspectives will be combined to aid the interpretation of moves and strategies in Chapter VII, which are in turn embedded in the overall schema of plot laid out in Chapter III.

## Chapter VII.

### Science, storytelling, and the politics of expertise

#### Introduction

This chapter addresses RQ2 directly:

*How does the NP overcome the issues associated with the identification and transfer of education 'best practices'?*

Chapter VI indicated that coalition members are generally aware of the issues inherent in the research ambition, and yet nonetheless contrive to deliver the communicative purpose. Engaging in advocacy rather than research, the emphasis falls on persuasion rather than explanation. This chapter is therefore framed by the schema of plot, exploring how advocates tailor the narrative fabric to develop a sense of inevitability about the proposed policies.

I identify six basic moves used to advance the story, and within these broad moves I identify a further range of strategies which enhance the persuasiveness of reports, and ensure the narrative's internal coherence. Ultimately, I reflect on how the pressures exerted by the story itself push down on researchers to shape the form of the NP. I first clarify the method used to guide the collection and analysis of data, and the selection of sample texts<sup>25</sup>.

#### ***Method: Analysis of narrative moves & strategies***

This chapter extends and nuances the preliminary phase of genre analysis (Auld and Morris 2014), exploring how coalition members overcome the issues associated with their communicative purpose. Recognising the functional nature of texts, which are always developed to do some job in a specific context (Halliday and Rugaiya 1985), I adopted principles from *move analysis* (Swales 1990), a subset of genre analysis. Move analysis 'explicitly studies texts in terms of their rhetorical goals and how they work to achieve those goals' (Tardy 2011, 56). It focuses on 'identifying and describing move types that can occur in [the] genre' (Upton and Cohen 2009, 588).

Move analysis begins with in-depth analysis of one or two examples of the genre, developing a framework of analytic categories that is then applied to

---

<sup>25</sup> Some of the analysis in this chapter forms the basis of an article scheduled to appear in the journal *Comparative Education*, titled, *PISA, policy and persuasion: translating complex conditions into education 'best practices'* (Auld and Morris *in press*). A declaration of authorship has been signed and submitted to the UCL examinations office.

analyse a broader corpus (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993). I introduced this initial phase of analysis in Chapters V and VI, which was detailed in Auld and Morris (2014). These preliminary categories were used to guide the analysis of a broader corpus of texts, which continued in an iterative process, developing and nuancing understanding until clear patterns emerged and the strategies began to reach saturation. The analysis is framed by the aims of the thesis, and is not intended to present an exhaustive treatment of the genre.

The basic *move types* were situated within the schema of plot, focusing on the two key story elements (decline & control). The analysis revealed a broad repertoire of strategies, which were used to strengthen the narrative probability across each of the six moves, shown in Table 5: (1) establish the frame; (2) establish expertise; (3) restrict the analytic focus; (4) draw recommendations; (5) qualify recommendations; and, (6) the idealised and tragic futures. The first move is an essential part of the policy process, while the second move is recognised as an important aspect of persuasion. These first two moves combine to provide a platform for advocacy. The next three moves overcome the issues inherent in the policy core beliefs directly, thereby supporting the story of control. The final move revisits the logic of action and/or emphasises the fortunate and fatal futures that await in the event of reform and inaction respectively.

While quantitative corpus analysis could have been used to identify the regularity of certain moves and strategies, the inquiry focuses on the form of comparative research within the broader storyline. Careful attention is given to the overall effect of the narrative, and the strategies within it, which is then interpreted with regard to the preceding theoretical review. This includes strategies used to ensure narrative coherence, the buttressing of beliefs, and the reinterpretation of reality. The analysis does not attempt to make concrete claims about what is *existentially real* for the individual actors whose reports feature in the analysis.

### ***Selection of sample texts***

The selection criteria for the sample texts must be clearly defined, and in a way that distinguishes the corpus from other genres (Bhatia 1993; Bazerman 2004). This was achieved by identifying the communicative purpose, which then provides the starting point for analysis (Van Nus 1999). Contextualization was achieved by surveying the existing literature, focusing on the socio-historical and philosophical context, related genre texts, and also the backgrounds and aims of

the individual(s)/organization(s) responsible for the sample texts (Bhatia 1993, 22-23).

I analysed upward of forty reports/articles in detail over the course of my thesis, focusing on texts which were: published by high-profile actors; influential (i.e. cited extensively by other coalition members and/or by policymakers); and were targeted at both global and national audiences. The analysis primarily focused on a small number of principle coalition members: the OECD, Andreas Schleicher, McKinsey & Company, and Michael Barber. In addition, I collated a range of secondary sources, including media coverage, commentaries, and organisational/biographical information to nuance the analysis.

While focusing on this core group, I also collected reports by other high-profile actors, looking in particular for any reports that received coverage in the media, or were referenced in policy circles, or by other coalition members. Due to constraints on time and space I was unable to include all of the actors/reports sampled, and a diverse and illustrative sample of reports was selected for the presentation of the analysis. The main reports that feature were listed in Table 1. (Chapter II). I provide additional background information on the featured organisations and authors, and the context of the specific reports, in Table 4 (below).

Care was taken to include sample texts from varying levels and nodes within the community, as the core aim was to capture the diversity of approaches and storylines rather than give the impression of a homogenous network. By laying out this framework of strategies, and situating it within the story schema, the analysis provides a foundation for studies focusing on specific actors, sub-genres, and/or advocacy coalitions and networks in greater depth.

**Table 4. Additional background information on main actors/reports featured**

Author/Organisation	Additional information (context/agenda)
OECD	Three reports were used to provide illustrative examples. One report (2013b) is focused at a general level, asking ‘what makes schools successful?’ The other two target the US (2013a) and Japan (2012) directly.
Andreas Schleicher	The featured papers/reports appeared in a variety of locations (e.g. journals, editorials), and are supplemented throughout with additional sources to nuance the analysis (e.g. featured interviews and newspaper articles/letters). This was possible/necessary due to Schleicher’s high-profile media presence and celebrity status ( <i>leader of the new age</i> ).
McKinsey & Company	The primary reports (2007a, 2010a, and 2010b) have been widely cited at the level of policy and present insight into one of the coalition’s most influential members. The 2007b report is included as it offers insight into McKinsey’s advocacy in a specific region.
Michael Barber* (NESTA)	The featured paper began as a speech for a conference of head teachers. Barber sets out ‘his fundamental beliefs about the importance of reforming education in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century’ (5), providing insight into his broader advocacy. In addition, Barber co-authored each of the featured publications by McKinsey, IPPR, and Pearson.
Institute for Public Policy (IPPR)	IPPR identifies itself as ‘the UK’s leading progressive think tank’. The featured publication was authored by Pearson employees, Michael Barber, Saad Rizvi, and Katelyn Donnelly, presenting a vision for the future of education in the ‘Asian’, or ‘Pacific’ century.
Grattan Institute	Grattan Institute describes itself as a non-partisan think tank, based in Australia. The report aims to learn how to achieve high-performance despite impending budget cuts, drawing on the lessons of East Asian nations’ success.
GEMS	International education company, with two main branches: schools; and, services/solutions (i.e. consultancy). The featured report explores the trade-off between class size and teacher salary to establish the most cost-efficient way to achieve high performance.
Worlds Apart Reynolds, D. & A. Farrell	Commissioned by Ofsted, the report is credited with consolidating the move towards the pursuit of world class schools, and the translation of SER to the transnational level. It was included as an early and influential example of the genre.
Pearson	Commercial organisation offering a range of education services and solutions. The specific report is targeted at Israel, highlighting its successes, the challenges it faces, and the strategies for innovating and staying ahead in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century.
Andy Hargreaves	Hargreaves consults with organizations and governments all over the world. The featured paper is based on a book co-authored with David Shirley (2009). Originally promoted as the Fourth Way, it was then upgraded to The Global Fourth Way (2012). The report is based on the former of these books, which promotes a new leadership paradigm.
Marc Tucker	Tucker’s blurb on the NCEE website identifies him as a leader of the standards-driven education reform movement for many years. The report presents his case for international benchmarking in the US, and identifies lessons from high-performing systems.

Table 5. Summary of moves and strategies

Move/Strategy	Overview of function
<p><b>1. Establish the frame: <i>logic of action</i></b>  <i>a) Constructed paranoia &amp; crisis rhetoric</i>  <i>b) Appeal to precedent</i>  <i>c) Undermine heretical perspectives</i></p>	<p>The context is framed to present the rationale for reform and the value of the research ambition as self-evident. Further strategies undermine alternate perspectives. Accepting the frame (and the research ambition) is portrayed as <i>the only reasonable position</i>.</p>
<p><b>2. Establish expertise</b>  <i>a) Reputation and/or experience</i>  <i>b) Statistics and quasi science</i>  <i>c) Genre knowledge (academic literature)</i></p>	<p>The advocate's reputation and/or experience is emphasized and endorsements from high-profile individuals are provided. Scholarly/scientific language is used and awareness of academic conventions is demonstrated in the form of caveats.</p>
<p><b>3. Restrict the analytical focus</b>  <i>a) Focus on quantifiable outcomes</i>  <i>b) Focus on high-performing systems</i>  <i>c) Confirmatory cases</i>  <i>d) Selective interpretation</i>  <i>e) Incomplete stories</i>  <i>f) Focus on overarching policy levers</i>  <i>g) Focus on factors 'amenable to control'</i></p>	<p>Cases and/or lines of enquiry that investigate complex causal interactions are marginalized or excluded. This lays the foundations for the development of straightforward causal stories.</p>
<p><b>4. Draw Recommendations</b>  <b>Step one (highlight the issues)</b>  <i>Discuss limitations; include caveats</i></p> <p><b>Step two (overcome the issues)</b>  <i>a) Outsourcing &amp; "established knowledge"</i></p> <p><i>b) Reject limitations/caveats</i></p> <p><i>c) Circumvent limitations/caveats</i>  <i>i) Hanging observations (precedent)</i>  <i>ii) Softening the ambition</i>  <i>iii) Mystique &amp; obfuscation</i></p>	<p>By demonstrating awareness of the issues/limitations, critique is pre-empted and the credibility of the researcher is safeguarded.</p> <p>Causal claims are attributed to other sources, or presented as 'what we already know'. In this way, responsibility for dealing with limitations can be outsourced.</p> <p>The limitations are rejected or restated as of secondary importance, enabling the research ambition to be delivered directly but leaving open the charge of simplification.</p> <p>Commonalities/associations are noted but explicit causal claims are avoided. The research ambition is thus delivered indirectly, protecting the advocate from criticism.</p>
<p><b>5. Qualify recommendations</b>  <i>a) Necessary (but not sufficient) conditions</i>  <i>b) Knowledge is contextual</i>  <i>c) The burden of implementation</i>  <i>d) Knowledge is imperfect</i></p>	<p>Complications and caveats are revisited or introduced to finesse the knowledge claims and/or to deflect responsibility if a policy based on the advocated 'best practice' fails.</p>
<p><b>6. The idealised &amp; tragic futures</b></p>	<p>This logic of action is revisited, and/or the narrator emphasises the idealised or tragic futures that awaits in the event of reform or inaction respectively. This vision may be levelled at a global level, and/or focus on the fate of a specific system/nation and its citizens.</p>

## Act 1

### A platform for advocacy

#### The imagined ordinary & 'the call'

I have argued that members of a discourse coalition engage in a form of policy marketing, in which a primary move lies in establishing the frame in a way that facilitates the development of their preferred storyline. Members engage in this process to varying degrees, depending on how they are situated within the coalition, and the nature and context of their advocacy. Less emphasis is needed on establishing the frame in contexts where the story's discourse has already achieved structuration and/or institutionalization. Context may refer both to the given target system and/or the intended audience within that system.

Where the imagined ordinary is already widely accepted, brief references to a school system's ranking relative to other systems, or even vague imperatives stressing the need to improve may prove sufficient. The omission of this stage may indicate a *presumed imaginary*; a belief that the frame logic is self-evident and that the audience therefore do not need inducted into its perspective and assumptions (i.e. it has been reified). The analysis here presents examples of the way in which the 'imagined ordinary' and 'the call' are presented, before focusing on a further array of strategies used to establish the frame. Collectively, these are termed *the logic of action*.

#### **Move one. The logic of action**

The first two stages of the story (the imagined ordinary, and the call) are generally bolstered by three strategies which establish the necessity and viability of the research ambition, combining to form *the logic of action*. Though they feature prominently at the beginning of reports, they are often revisited to provide impetus for reform and to support specific recommendations. The strategies are: *constructed paranoia & crisis rhetoric*; *appeal to precedent*; and, *undermine heretical perspectives and/or instruments*.

These strategies serve a critical role in establishing the frame, and provide a basis for developing specific sub-stories. They can be related back to the concept of conversion, whereby the perceived change in conditions serves to destabilise the existential balance of a society, undermining the status quo and provoking a change in the institutional structure. This new myth promotes a global sense of

community, and identity, and the words of the prophets are supported by the appearance of new stars in the night sky.

***(a) Constructed paranoia and crisis rhetoric***

Earlier I made a distinction between three general levels within the coalition: frame sponsorship; norm-setting; and, norm-using. These may be pursued in both global and domestic settings. The OECD was identified as the primary frame sponsor, in part due to its role in the production of comparative datasets to lay the framework for the narrative (and PISA in particular), and also its proactive dissemination strategies, including the marketing of publications and presence in the mass media.

At a second level, norm-setting, commercial organisations and entrepreneurs promote the imaginary in an attempt to open a window for reform in foreign contexts, while others engage in evangelism in their domestic context. Finally, coalition members that are norm-using draw on the narrative fabric to position policy solutions, exhibiting varying degrees of faith in the construct (true believer; agnostic; sceptic). Here I identify strategies used to promote the story logic, beginning with Andreas Schleicher and the OECD.

The story begins by establishing the transition into the imagined ordinary, creating uncertainty and destabilising the status-quo. It then moves on to develop 'the call', either by developing a form of constructed paranoia, or drawing attention to a system's performance relative to competitors to develop a crisis of standards. Henry, Lingard et al. (2001) point out that the OECD is primarily interested in 'fostering rather than mediating market relations', and this is readily captured in the evangelism of Andreas Schleicher. In his foreword to the McKinsey (2007) report, Schleicher explains:

The capacity of countries - both the world's most advanced economies as well as those experiencing rapid development - to compete in the global knowledge economy increasingly depends on whether they can meet the growing demand for high-level skills. This, in turn, hinges on significant improvements in the quality of schooling outcomes. (6)

He concludes with a stern warning:

The world is indifferent to tradition and past reputations, unforgiving of frailty and ignorant of custom or practice. Success will go to those individuals and countries which are swift to adapt, slow to complain and open to change. (6)

A subsequent challenge is amended according to the audience:

McKinsey Report (global): the task for *governments* will be to ensure that *countries* rise to this challenge. (2007, 6)

Lisbon Council (Europe): the task of *European* governments will be to ensure that *European* countries rise to this challenge. (Schleicher 2006, 16)

UK: the task of *UK* policymakers is to help *its citizens* rise to this challenge. (Schleicher 2012)

GEMS efficiency index (global): the task for *governments* is to help *their citizens* rise to the challenge. (Schleicher 2014b)

These incessant challenges capture the spirit of ‘constructed paranoia’. In the context of this global war for talent, education serves as nations’ munitions factory and ‘improvement’ becomes a matter of national/system survival. Reform is the policymaker’s patriotic duty. While these conditions may be sufficient to provide impetus for reform, *the call* may be levelled more directly by highlighting a system’s performance relative to its competitor nations. While the OECD (2013a) emphasises the substandard performance of the US relative to other nations, the narrative is amended for nations that consistently perform well. As the OECD (2013a) explains, ‘every country has room for improvement, even the top performers’ (13). In *Lessons from PISA for Japan* (OECD 2012), it states:

It is no accident that Japan has been at or near the top of the international rankings on education surveys since those surveys began... However Japan cannot rest on its laurels... Just two generation ago, South Korea had the economic output equivalent to that of Afghanistan today, and was 23<sup>rd</sup> in terms of educational output among OECD countries. Today, South Korea is one of the top performers in terms of the proportion of successful school leavers, 94% obtaining a high school diploma. (17)

PISA also shows a fair number of countries and economies with performance levels close to or higher than Japan’s. Japan therefore needs to ensure that its stock of human capital remains competitive with that of other countries and economies around the world and in the region – such as Shanghai-China, Korea, Hong-Kong China and Singapore. (203)

South Korea’s achievements are compared to the 95% of school leavers successfully completing high school in Japan, using the recent improvements of this close neighbour, and historical rival, to heighten the sense of urgency and paranoia. Having established the unforgiving nature of global competition in this new age, and the threat posed by competitor nations, Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary General, signs off the foreword to *Lessons from PISA for Japan* (2012) by stating:

The OECD stands ready to support Japan in consolidating its position as top performer in education and innovation and making the best out of its investment in education. (3)

A peculiar conflict of interest emerges, as the organisation vows to help Japan consolidate its position while simultaneously advising other countries how to usurp them, and other high performers, in the rankings. Similar strategies are deployed in other regions. In an OECD blog, titled *Knowledge and Skills are Infinite: Oil is not<sup>26</sup>*, Schleicher aptly opens with a Bible reference, recalling how Moses led the Israelites on a 40-year ramble through the wilderness in search of the Promised Land. And while Moses led them to the only geographical region in the Middle East with no oil, Schleicher reflects that this may have been an act of extraordinary foresight, having required the modern nation of Israel to invest in human capital and thereby allowing them to develop a strong presence in the global knowledge economy.

Pearson (2013) lauds Israel's exceptional economic success but foresees trouble:

The remarkable results delivered by high-skilled workers in Israel today speak volumes about the quality of Israeli education institutions at all levels over the last six decades... Despite this, in the international comparisons, Israel performed well below the international average on PISA (2009) across reading, math and science, scoring 37<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup>, respectively. Similarly on PIRLS (2006) and TIMSS (2007) Israel was below the average in the over forty-country comparison, coming in at 26<sup>th</sup> in reading, 24<sup>th</sup> in math, and 25<sup>th</sup> in science. (13-14)

As it states, 'this underperformance represents a threat to the State's ongoing success' (2013). The perceived threat is perhaps sharpened by the processes of whole-system reform being pursued by other nations in the region, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The McKinsey (2007b) report acknowledges that improvements have been made in the GCC states, but asserts that more has to be done:

Poor showing on the most recent global standardized math and science tests, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), served as a wake-up call for GCC policy makers... The national assessments that followed have only confirmed those results. (39)

The GCC states' poor performance relative to the international standards set by TIMSS is used to provide impetus for reform, and is sharpened by emphasising the implications of improvement in education outcomes for the region's future. As McKinsey (2010a) states, 'never waste a good crisis' (94), real or imagined. The report highlights the national and individual benefits of reform:

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.jp/2012/03/knowledge-and-skills-are-infinite-oil.html>

Educational reform in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states will increase the well-being of their citizens and help them to develop a globally competitive workforce. (39)

One of the McKinsey (2007b) report's key recommendations for GCC states is to participate in global tests:

Most high-performing countries not only administer their own examinations but also participate in international assessments to rank their students' performance against that of students elsewhere and to provide an external check on their own quality assessments... Although only Bahrain and Saudi Arabia took part in the 2003 TIMSS, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar will join them in the upcoming 2007 exams; only the UAE will not be participating. (46)

As highlighted in Chapter VI, the introduction of systems of performance management and participation in international assessments provide additional substance to the storyline, and any underperformance relative to competitors may be used to overcome resistance to reform. Once the datasets have been introduced, any improvement in outcomes can be used to highlight the efficacy of interventions. Other strategies may be used to deflect blame in the event that the projected gains do not materialise (see *qualifying recommendations*).

#### ***b) Appeal to precedent***

Watson (2013) highlights the important role of precedent in argumentation, and the strategy consistently appears across coalition reports. The appeals are used as a form of legitimation, strengthening both the significance and viability of the research ambition through appeal to: *other (high-performing) systems; high-profile reports and/or coalition members; other sectors and/or fields; or, a bygone era*. The strategy is also used on occasion to promote to specific policies (see *overcome the issues*).

#### ***i) Other (high-performing) systems***

The appeal to other (high-performing) systems has two aspects. First, it operates as a key stage in *constructed paranoia*, completing the effect by challenging policymakers to ignore their global competitors and risk being left behind. The strategy has a self-fulfilling property, gaining legitimacy as more nations subscribe to the storyline. The appeal is common across coalition reports :

More and more countries are looking beyond their own borders for evidence of the most successful and efficient policies and practices. (OECD 2013, 12)

Every one of the top performers is very conscious of what the other top

performers are doing, though some benchmark more aggressively than others. (Tucker 2011, 5)

Many countries are trying to emulate the success of these (high-performing) systems. Most have further to go. This report shows in detail how it can be done. (Grattan 2012, 2)

The second stage of the strategy draws attention to cases that have improved their education outcomes, thereby proving that the proposed strategy ‘works’. Schleicher (2011a) provides an example:

Countries [with improved outcomes] did not change their culture, or the composition of their populations, nor did they fire their teachers; they changed their education policies and practices. (no page number)

Having asserted a causal connection between undisclosed reforms and improved outcomes on PISA (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*), the report highlights ‘the hallmarks of successful school systems’. Tucker (2011) attempts to move the ambition beyond political affiliation and ideology:

The claim that this... has on our attention is simply that *it has worked*. It has worked in countries as different as Singapore and Finland, Japan and Canada. It is not a Republican agenda or a Democratic agenda. It is neither conservative nor liberal. (47 italics added)

Overall the claims assert (1) other systems are adopting this approach to reform, and (2) the approach has been successful (it has ‘worked’). Given the hyper-competitive imaginary that provides a backdrop to the story, these two aspects of the *appeal to other systems* combine to create a powerful case for change.

### ***ii) Other influential or high-profile texts***

This appeal asserts the feasibility of the communicative purpose through reference to the achievements of high-profile reports or organisations. For example, the McKinsey (2010) report was described as one of the most recent and sophisticated examples of the genre by members of the School Effectiveness and School improvement (SESI) research community (see Thomas, Salim et al. 2012), serving as a touchstone for subsequent reports and a source of legitimacy. Schleicher (2009) notes the problems associated with the research ambition, but asserts:

Several expert studies have reviewed *some* of the education systems with high performance standards and found *some features they share*. (254 italics added)

The expert studies referred to are another OECD report (2004) and the McKinsey (2007) report, which itself relied heavily on the OECD to support its claims.

Similarly, the Grattan (2012) report asserts:

A body of international research has identified the common characteristics of high-performing education systems. (13)

Reports by the OECD and McKinsey are referenced to support the claim. IPPR (2012) states:

The 2010[a] McKinsey report... went a step further and analysed how the top performing school systems continue to improve. The work concluded that a system could become better, no matter what its starting point, given a sustained leadership and a focus on key interventions necessary for systematic improvement. (40)

None of these reports deals with the underlying issues, especially establishing causality. Still, however, they are united in the conviction that other reports have demonstrated the legitimacy and significance of the research ambition. Silova and Brehm (2015) identify how this process of referencing, 'although not problematic in itself, can create a closed system of circular knowledge - the legitimization of a view by claiming another scholar has published the same view elsewhere' (27). I will return to examine the implications of this process below (see *established knowledge*).

### ***iii) Other sectors (e.g. business) or fields (e.g. medical research)***

Precedents from a variety of sectors and fields are invoked to promote the significance and viability of the research ambition, with the main sources being *medical research*, *business management*, and *industrial benchmarking*. These sources have slight nuances in effect and have been used at different stages. For example, in his lecture to the Teacher Training Agency, Hargreaves (1996) suggested that medical research might serve as a model for educational researchers, stating:

There is a very sharp difference in the way the two professions approach *applied* research. Much medical research is not itself basic research... but a type of applied research which gathers evidence about what works in what circumstances... [In contrast], educational researchers write mainly for one another in their countless academic journals, which are not to be found in a school staffroom. (2-3)

While such appeals to medical research were advanced at a general level, to deride education research as unscientific and irrelevant, they are now most commonly used to promote randomized control trials (RCTs) as the Gold Standard, rather than as a model for international comparisons. Nonetheless,

similar appeals do appear in coalition reports:

Along the same lines as “evidence-based medicine”, Long Beach Unified School District identifies the best delivery methods from pilot data and then rolls out the program across all its primary schools. (McKinsey 2010a, 42)

Coalition members are more likely to invoke precedents in *business management* and *industrial benchmarking*:

Variations in cultural context and tradition have never prevented management in any area from trying out reforms that have been introduced abroad... When such experiments have taken place within non-educational sectors of society... they have been productive for the professionals concerned and for the wider society (Worlds Apart 1996, 59)

Companies that practice industrial benchmarking do not adopt innovations *only when all* of their best competitors practice them. They adopt them when the innovations of particular competitors appear to work well and when they make sense for the company doing the benchmarking in the context of their own goals and circumstances (Tucker 2011, 2 italics added)

Tucker’s appeal paves the way for the promotion of any practice or structure that is present in one or more high-performing systems. Any solitary observation can be used to justify a causal story if the practice/structure is judged to be relevant in the context of the given system’s ‘own goals and circumstances’. The OECD (2012) increasingly promotes industrial benchmarking as a model for education reform, arguing that ‘decision makers in the education arena can benefit from benchmarking research in the same way as heads of firms’ (23). As it states:

Industrial benchmarking gained currency at the close of the 1970s and the early 1980s when Japanese firms began to challenge large multi-national American firms globally. Many American firms did not survive that challenge. But those that did owe their survival to their use of benchmarking techniques. (OECD 2012, 24)

At a basic level, the promotion of industrial benchmarking rests on the assumptions highlighted earlier in the thesis, specifically the notion that the aims and outcomes of education systems are directly commensurable, and are accurately captured by PISA. By invoking this precedent, we may infer that coalition members do not view the concept of education transfer as problematic. I will return to explore the OECD’s vision for the future of education reform later in this chapter.

#### ***(iv) A bygone era***

This appeal identifies a period of former prosperity with practices that were popular during that period but have since been abandoned. While this may be

advanced with regard to a specific policy or education practice, it is also used to promote the approach to reform. An example of this strategy being used to promote the research ambition is provided by Tucker (2011):

A century ago, the US was among the most eager benchmarkers in the world. We took the best ideas in steelmaking, industrial chemicals and many other fields from England and Germany and others and put them to work here on a scale that Europe could not match. At the same time, we were borrowing the best ideas in education, mainly from the Germans and the Scots. It was the period of the most rapid growth our economy had ever seen... But, after World War II, the US appeared to reign supreme in both the industrial and education arenas and we evidently came to the conclusion that we had little to learn from anyone. As the years went by, one by one, country after country caught up to and then surpassed us in several industries and more or less across the board in precollege education. And still we slept. (1)

These appeals portray those not engaged in the crusade as backward, arrogant or complacent. Moreover, the statement reveals the instrumental value now placed on education, which it is directed towards driving the nation's economy, just as industries such as steelmaking and car manufacture once did.

***c) Undermining heretical perspectives, instruments, and actors***

Questioning the *reality* of critical/heretical perspectives, the *logic* of heretical instruments, or the *motives* and/or *expertise* of critics, deflects attention from the issues inherent in the search for best practices and affirms the reality of the construct.

***(i) The unreality of alternatives***

Earlier I argued that policy marketers aim to purge the discursive space of alternate storylines in a process of institutionalisation, or conversion. A key step lies in establishing the change in conditions to the ordinary world, which in turn demands a reappraisal of values and priorities. Any perspectives that do not recognise or privilege the values enshrined in the fabric of the calculable world, and in particular, the pursuit of neoliberal policies, are cast as inferior.

Schleicher often concludes presentations with the refrain: 'Remember, without data you are just another person with an opinion'. Waldow (2012) describes this as 'a classic example of externalisation to the principles and results of science, as a way of legitimizing oneself and undermining one's critics' legitimacy' (423). The implication is that PISA-type data is capable of capturing an objective reality, whereas other realities are of a lesser status as they are not expressed in quantifiable terms.

Schleicher's maxim is particularly significant given the OECD's resources and influence. Hanz-Dieter Meyer highlights the issue:

[The OECD] looks more and more like a global super-ministry of education... It owns a very big chunk of the world's educational policy research. It has greater influence on the generation and analysis of educational data than any other single institution. (Quoted in Wilby 2014).

Schleicher's move ensures that critique is conducted according to the language of the system. Though critics may debate the legitimacy of specific policy lessons, or present technical problems with the data, the frame itself is placed beyond question. The transition from oil-based to knowledge-based economies in the Gulf region presents a more direct example of the process. In an article exploring Saudi Arabia's economic prospects<sup>27</sup>, *The Economist* noted that, 'companies... complain of too few qualified workers because the schools teach mostly religion'. The McKinsey (2007b) report tackles the issue implicitly by advancing and legitimating the preferred storyline to establish the logic of action. Elsewhere, the Pearson (2013) report cites the risks that the Israel faces from within:

Today the State funds Haredi schools that do not teach core skills and also exempts Haredi citizens from the enriching experience of military service. Enabled by state funding, the Haredi population is willingly excluding itself from general life in the State... This is, of course, a legitimate choice made for historical social and cultural reasons, but the educational and economic costs need to be acknowledged. (15)

As jobs shift in a knowledge economy, cognitive skills become increasingly important. This demands that an education system should strengthen core subjects while advancing creativity. (20)

In Israel in particular this represents a real challenge. Groups disagree on the nature of Israeli history or even what constitutes a core subject (e.g., most Haredis consider Torah but not mathematics a core subject)... the value of a core curriculum and minimum educational standards in bringing cohesion to a segregated society should be considered. (20)

The report closes by reiterating the conditions of the imagined ordinary:

A forward-looking national approach to education reform will be necessary to maintain universal high standards across Israel. There is no other choice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where high quality universal education has become the lynchpin of a successful society and thriving economy. (34)

The authors acknowledge the historical, social and cultural reasons for the

---

<sup>27</sup> The Economist. (2015). *Austerity in Saudi Arabia: The start of something*. Print Edition, 06.02.2016. Online, 14.10.2015. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21674403-will-it-be-enough-start-something> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)

diversity of beliefs represented by different social groups, and stress that they consider the Haredi population's *de facto* exclusion to be a 'legitimate' choice. Ultimately, however, they restate the unforgiving nature of the ordinary world and claim that there is 'no other choice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' but to pursue neoliberal policies. In this way, the values and beliefs of other communities are cast as backwards and inferior. Measures must be taken to align them with the new truth.

**(ii) Undermine logic & heretical instruments**

Advocates of 'what works' often depict themselves as pragmatists, thereby drawing implicit contrast with impractical theorists (Farnsworth and Solomon 2013). By defining what forms of knowledge count as evidence, any opposition is recast more generally as irrational resistance to 'evidence-based' policy (Hammersley 2013). While often left implicit, coalition members may undermine the logic of any opposition:

The situation in which England finds itself is now so worrying, that the risk involved in looking outward and trying new practices is worth taking... *The way to cease being worlds apart is surely to adopt an open mind.* (Worlds Apart 1996, 59 italics added)

The capacity of educators to stumble into a false dichotomy and debate it (vigorously and at length to the benefit of no-one) is legendary – for example, the widely held but absurd view that because some things can't be measured, we should measure nothing. (Barber 2009, 19)

By distancing themselves from absolute transfer (see *genre knowledge*) and deriding this extreme negative position, advocates adopt the middle ground within the established frame; the only reasonable position. Voegelin (1952) identifies how a taboo is often placed on instruments of critique, which might undermine the "truth" of the given movement. Voegelin uses the example of the Puritan reformation in which 'the taboo had to fall on classic philosophy and scholastic theology' (140). This taboo is often placed in conjunction with the introduction of a standardized canon. As Voegelin notes, 'a work of this type would serve the double purpose of a guide to the right reading of the Scripture and of an authentic formulation of truth that would make recourse to earlier literature unnecessary' (138-139).

A clear parallel is found in systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which portend to synthesize available knowledge into one authoritative text, and which favour approved instruments (implicitly placing a taboo on others, which do not meet the specified criteria for rigour). This canon thus becomes the last word on

the subject. The World Bank makes extensive use of this device, with the canon developed using the approved indicators and instruments (e.g. RCTs and systematic reviews). It is also a feature of the numerous companion publications released by the OECD, such as *Education at a Glance*, which provide a guide to the correct reading of the PISA data. As one OECD official stated about *Education at a Glance*, ‘some people say it’s like a bible’ (quoted in Gorur 2015 592).

Other forms of knowledge, which deal with similar issues but that are not expressed using the approved indicators or instruments, are easily dismissed as inferior, or irrelevant.

### ***(iii) Motives and expertise***

Coalition members may question the *motives* or *expertise* of heretics, or heretical groups. An example is provided by Hopmann and Brinek (2007, 14), reflecting on the German PISA consortium’s response to an invitation to contribute to a volume engaging critically with PISA. Hopmann and Brinek claim that the first response was silence, with one member of the consortium stating that engaging would merely ‘provide a forum for unproven allegations’. The next step was to raise doubts about the motives and abilities of critics, arguing that they ‘were unqualified to discuss PISA’, and that ‘they were probably driven by envy or other non-scholarly motives’. Next, they would acknowledge some issues, but ‘insist that they are very limited in nature and scope’, or ‘that these problems are well known within large-scale survey research of the kind like PISA, and even unavoidable when working comparatively’. Finally, they would dismiss the criticism as ‘nothing new’, and ‘nothing that has not been dealt with within the PISA research itself’, referring to ‘opaque technical reports... or to unpublished papers or reports’.

An example of these strategies in action is found in Schleicher’s response to an article in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES), titled *Is PISA Fundamentally Flawed?*<sup>28</sup>. The article drew on research by a number of academics (Kreiner and Cristensen 2014; Jerrim 2011; Goldstein 2004; Morrison 2013), and interviews with the authors of these papers. Schleicher<sup>29</sup> moved to discredit these heretics, targeting Kreiner and Christensen (2014) directly:

---

<sup>28</sup> Stewart, W. (2014), *Is PISA fundamentally flawed?*, in TES online, 27. 09.2014. Available at: <https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storycode=6344672> (last accessed 10.02.2016).

<sup>29</sup> TES (2014b) *Attacks on Pisa Entirely Unjustified*, TES online, 24.02.2015. Available at: <https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storycode=6345213> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).

Professor Svend Kreiner and Professor Karl Bang Christensen suggest in their report... that there should be no variability in performance on individual questions between students in different countries. Little consideration is needed to realise that this idea is nonsense.

Pisa has convincingly and conclusively shown that the design of the tests and the scaling model used to score them lead to robust measures of country performance that are not affected by the composition of the item pool... The results of these analyses are documented in the Pisa Technical Reports, and there has been considerable technical discussion of the statistical models used in Pisa, much of which has been published either on the OECD website or in academic journals and conference proceedings...

The mention in TES... that Kreiner is "sceptical about the whole concept of Pisa" - and, presumably, about other international surveys - may perhaps go some way towards explaining why he chooses to ignore all this.

A sideways swipe is levelled at Dr Hugh Morrison, who had levelled philosophical objections to the Rasch model underlying the PISA survey design, and who claimed in the TES article that his concerns had been met with 'absolute silence' by top officials. Schleicher stated:

He does not show any knowledge of the methods used in the Pisa survey and does not refer to any of the technical literature on Pisa. It is difficult to see how his paper can be considered relevant to the methodological debate.

Philosophical questions are thus prohibited. Schleicher closes emphatically:

The OECD does not see any scientific or academic merit in these papers, and considers the accusations made in TES, based on these flawed analyses, to be completely unjustified.

In the TES (2014a) article, Goldstein states that he had first published his criticisms of PISA in 2004 but then claims that the OECD had steadfastly ignored the issues. Schleicher elected not to respond to Goldstein's paper directly, and the full range of strategies outlined by Hopmann and Brinek are thus replicated in Schleicher's response. Elsewhere, Schleicher's<sup>30</sup> response to an open letter from a number of high-profile academics, published in the Guardian<sup>31</sup>, was less derogatory but nonetheless unequivocal: 'The letter by Dr Heinz-Dieter Meyer and other academics... makes a series of false claims regarding the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Pisa programme'. He then

---

<sup>30</sup> Schleicher, A. (2014). PISA programme not about short-term fixes, in *The Guardian* online, 08.05.2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/08/pisa-programme-short-term-fixes> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).

<sup>31</sup> Open Letter (2014). OECD and PISA tests are damaging education worldwide - academics, in *The Guardian* online, 06.05.2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/06/oecd-pisa-tests-damaging-education-academics> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).

addresses the criticisms by explaining how the signatories had either misrepresented or misunderstood the organisations' intent, operations, and influence. I return to explore further details of his response later in this chapter (see *hanging observations*).

Examples from other coalition members include:

Maybe the criticisms reflect, firstly, some simple ignorance. Many of them appear to come from people who have read very little school effectiveness research..... the volume and the intemperate nature of the criticisms suggest that some other processes must be in play to generate such non rational emotional spasms (Reynolds and Teddlie 2001, 104)

There are system leaders who reach accommodation with the most powerful lobby groups, intentionally ignoring the knowledge we have, because they choose a quiet life ahead of a successful system... There are many educators and system leaders who simply don't believe that successful change is possible. There are academics who use sophisticated statistical techniques to support the view that social background remorselessly determines outcomes, regardless of what education systems do (Barber 2009, 19)

In the second statement, generalised assertions of unclear provenance are used to undermine the *ethos* of anyone who emphasizes (probably using PISA data) social background as an influence on student outcomes. The strategy reflects ACF's emphasis on the importance of shared beliefs for in-group cohesion, and distrust of others who 'since they come to conclusions different from ours must be motivated by hidden, nefarious interests' (Sabatier 1998, 109).

### ***Move 2. Establishing expertise***

The NP is influenced by two competing considerations. Advocates must communicate recommendations in a manner that is both accessible and unambiguous, yet they must also assume the authoritative voice of an expert, one that is both academic and scientific. Oxley, Vedlitz et al. (2014) demonstrate that perceptions of advocates' credibility is a vital aspect of persuasion, a point which relates to the concept of *characterological coherence*. Having set the story on the desired trajectory, advocates must yet assert the authority of their interpretation over that of other experts, or critics of the approach more generally. Pressed for time, individuals will determine whether they trust the source of a claim, rather than subject it to in-depth scrutiny.

Below I highlight three strategies used to establish expertise directly: *reputation, experience, and/or insider knowledge; statistics and quasi-science;* and, *genre knowledge*. Perceptions of credibility are also affected by the degree to which the message resonates with individuals' pre-existing values and beliefs

(Lachapelle, Monpetit et al. 2014), underlining the primary importance of establishing the frame, and the limitations of the coalition's influence in contexts where the storyline has not achieved structuration. Taken in conjunction with the logic of action, this move provides coalition members with a platform for advocacy.

***(a) Reputation and/or experience***

*Reputation, past success and/or experience*, rather than demonstrable rigour, are used to support claims. The OECD brand is often used as a source to justify policy interventions, while Andreas Schleicher has been hailed in the media as both 'the world's schoolmaster'<sup>32</sup>, and 'the godfather of such global education comparisons'<sup>33</sup>. Entrepreneurial academics, such as Michael Barber and Andy Hargreaves, develop reputations as celebrity reformers, moving across nations to promote their improvement formulas. Other consultants operate under the authority of large transnational organisations, such as the OECD or World Bank, or commercial organisations, such as McKinsey and Pearson. Reports may emphasize the credentials and international experience of the authors and/or organisation(s), for example:

This paper is the result of constant dialogue among the authors as we've worked together, first on education reform in Pakistan... and second as part of an innovative team at the heart of Pearson, the world's largest education company, where we are seeking to resolve the dilemmas of providing quality education to people of all ages on every continent. (IPPR 2012, 1)

This report is the result of a collaborative effort between the OECD and international experts with extensive expertise in analysing the performance of education systems internationally. (OECD 2012, 5 italics added)

We rely on research conducted by a team assembled by the National Center on Education and the Economy, at the request of the OECD, which examined the strategies employed by Canada (focusing on Ontario), China (focusing on Shanghai), Finland, Japan and Singapore. But we also rely on other research conducted by the OECD, by other researchers and, over two decades, by the National Center on Education and the Economy. (Tucker 2011, 1)

The McKinsey (2010a) report is positioned as a response to questions raised by policymakers following the 2007 report (12), casting the authors in the role of

---

<sup>32</sup> Stewart, W. (2011). "The 'world's schoolmaster' delivers his annual report." *TES* online, 16.09.2011. Available at: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6112054>. (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

<sup>33</sup> Coughlan, S. (2012). China: the World's Cleverest Country? in *BBC* online, 09.05.2012. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17585201> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

expert advisor. Reports often feature endorsements from other members of the coalition, or acknowledge high-profile actors and/or insiders, as advisors. For example, the Grattan Report (2012) states that it was based on a roundtable discussion (7), providing details of the high-profile attendees (including Schleicher and representatives from high-performing East Asian systems) whose insights were used to ‘direct’ the analysis. Schleicher regularly provides celebrity endorsements in the form of forewords (e.g. McKinsey 2007; GEMS 2014), while the foreword for IPPR (2012) is provided by Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore.

Robertson (2011) notes how the group promoting PPPs ‘write and speak at each other’s initiatives (publications, seminars, courses, and so on)’ (10), while Ball and Exley (2011) argue that validation from ‘academics within prestigious universities lends legitimacy, authority and an air of rigour to ideas’ (161). The McKinsey (2010a) report includes a glowing foreword by Professor Michael Fullan, who is also acknowledged for his ‘counsel and thought partnership’ (3). The IPPR sequel, *An Avalanche is Coming* (Barber, Donnelly et al. 2013), includes a foreword by Professor Lawrence Summers. While such endorsements are common, *insider knowledge* (e.g. high-profile representatives from East Asian systems) may be emphasised to lend authority to interpretations, and to dismiss alternate claims as superficial, or misguided (e.g. Grattan 2012).

### ***(b) Statistics & quasi-science***

The emphasis on advocates’ personal experience evokes Kim’s (2014) claim that ‘what constitutes “comparative knowledge” is not solely Wissenschaften (scientific knowledge) but is more often entwined with Weltanschauungen (world view) derived from lived experiences’ (58). Given the hierarchy of knowledge established by contemporary scientism and the politics of expertise, however, advocates must yet demonstrate their scientific credentials. This is achieved primarily through the statistical basis of comparisons. Stone (1988) characterises the implicit meaning as, ‘the numbers show that my story is true’ (134). The OECD draws heavily on its reputation for statistical expertise:

...[PISA] provides the world’s most extensive and rigorous set of international surveys of the knowledge and skills of secondary school students. (2013, 3)

Schleicher (2014) repeatedly refers to ‘what PISA *shows*’, using straightforward associations derived from the data to implicitly promote policy lessons (see *hanging observations*). As noted, advocates rely on the perceived validity of PISA and its relevance as an indicator for future economic competitiveness. Reports derive authority from the OECD’s reputation by drawing attention to the source of the data. For example:

The OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a series of extensive and rigorous international surveys that assess the knowledge and skills of 15 year-olds. More than 70 countries participated in the most recent round of assessment. PISA tests are designed to capture how well students are equipped to apply academic skills in real-world situations. (Grattan 2012, 9)

The Grattan Institute (2012) uses the data to demonstrate how many years students in the US and EU are behind their East Asian peers (8), and the superior efficiency of these systems (10). The McKinsey (2010a) report moves to establish the authority of voice through the statistical basis of comparisons:

We have relied upon data drawn from well-respected international authorities that, once standardized, has enabled us to make an objective comparison of different systems. (111)

The notion that comparative surveys have solved the problem of commensurability was already evident before PISA. *Worlds Apart* (1996) notes ‘the problem of comparing countries on a “common currency”’ (52), and specifically, the difficulty in ‘designing tests which sample the curricula in all countries acceptably’ (11). Later, however, it asserts that it ‘solved the... problem [of commensurability] by using standard achievement tests’ (52). Further innovations may be used to present ideas in quasi-scientific formats.

Barber (2009) promotes a ‘conceptual formula’ for well educated students: *Well-Educated = E(K+T+L)*<sup>34</sup>. Barber (2009) does not take credit for the formula, conceding that it was relayed to him in secret by the ‘Intergalactic Audit Commission (IAC)’, ‘whose job it is to examine how well the leading species on each planet fulfils its stewardship responsibilities’ (7). By deferring to ‘[the Commission’s] collection of turnaround specialists from across the galaxy’ (12), Barber provides a rare example of externalization to the intergalactic situation and the principles and results of alien intelligence. Pearson (2013) presents the same formula as a ‘mathematical equation’ (20), while IPPR (2012) positions it as a ‘platform’ for curriculum reform rather than a ‘straightjacket’:

---

<sup>34</sup> Where K equals *knowledge*; T, *thinking/thought*; L, *leadership*; and E, *ethics*.

To clarify a debate about the curriculum, which has a tendency to spiral into jargon, we have attempted to summarise what children should learn in a simple mathematical equation: Well-educated [students] = E(K+T+L). (IPPR 2012, 49)

The formula is picked up in a number of newspaper articles, including one in the Times Educational Supplement (TES) that refers to Barber as an ‘education guru’<sup>35</sup>. During his time with the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PDMU) under New Labour, Barber coined the term *deliverology* to describe the Unit’s approach to system change. The “science” of *deliverology* is duly promoted by McKinsey (see Barber, Kihn et al. 2011), while the IPPR (2012) report asserts: ‘increasingly, a science or quasi science of effective delivery in government is emerging’ (60). This underpins the concept of ‘system effectiveness’ that is being applied by ‘increasing numbers of system leaders’ (Barber 2009, 16). It also ties in well with McKinsey & Company’s unequivocal motto, “everything can be measured, and what gets measured gets managed” (Wetfeet 2009).

This bold maxim perfectly captures the faith that the reality of which we are a part can be taken into the form of a system and subjected to direct control.

### **(c) Genre knowledge**

Reports are mindful to stress their qualitative aspects. The OECD (2012) asserts that its research entailed a process of document review and then interviews, which included historians, economists, education experts, citizens, and journalists, thereby allowing for an ‘alternative benchmarking’ (23). Similarly, McKinsey (2010a) draws attention to its interviews to emphasize that ‘findings [were] not ... the result of some abstract statistical exercise’ (13). Reports stress the exhaustive nature of the approach. For example:

Based on extensive research of high-performing education systems, school districts and networks comprising a study of Finland’s educational system, of a network of 300 secondary schools in England, of the province of Alberta in Canada and of the Tower Hamlets school district in UK, it has been possible to discern and distill a set of powerful principles of educational change. (Hargreaves 2012, 11)

I will return to consider how such principles are discerned and distilled in the following section. Worlds Apart (1996) includes an overview of the literature used, the rationale for the report, and its structure (1). It discusses ‘methodological and practical problems’ (11-13), and demonstrates knowledge of

---

<sup>35</sup> Stewart, W. (2012) Pause to Consider the Role Games have to Play, in *TES* online, 02.11.2012. Available at: <https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storycode=6298795> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)

the 'complexities of the field' by directing the reader to references for further reading (1). In this way, the authors adopt the role of expert, aware of the issues but too pressed for time and space to be dragged into the 'minefield of debate' (1).

Despite these moves, the association of the research ambition with crude borrowing remains problematic. Reports generally avoid reference to policy *borrowing*, or *transfer*, and describe a process of policy *learning*:

The idea was not to *copy* what they were doing, but to *learn* from them... Though one can always question whether policies that are successful in one place will succeed in another - and surely no country can simply adopt another nation's system or policies - comparative data and analysis seem to rapidly expand the scope for *learning* from the successes and failures of education policies and practices around the world (Schleicher 2012a, 81 italics added)

Increasingly, education leaders around the world study the rankings not just to see how their own country comes out, but to learn from other countries. Some of this learning is crude and shallow: 'Finland is top, so we'll be like Finland...' forgetting that education systems are embedded in cultures and some countries (Finland is a good example) are socially highly distinctive (IPPR 2012, 39)

Genre knowledge is further demonstrated by highlighting limitations and including appropriate caveats, relating to culture, context, the complexity of social interactions and the problem of causality, and even direct statements warning against policy borrowing:

Factors that work in one context may not work within another. (Worlds Apart 1996)

The report does not claim that the political and policymaking structures of East Asia can or should be reproduced elsewhere. (Grattan 2012, 2)

Clearly there are some inevitable differences between schools: policy makers in Seoul, Helsinki and Chicago operate in completely different cultural and political contexts, and confront different challenges... England's system contains 25,000 schools, Boston's just 150. (McKinsey 2010a, 13)

By itself, a cross-national international assessment such as PISA cannot identify clear-cut cause-and-effect relationships. (Schleicher 2009, 253-254)

Comparing mathematics performance, and educational performance more generally, poses numerous challenges... Comparing performance across countries adds more layers of complexity, because students are given tests in different languages, and because the social, economic and cultural context of the countries being compared are often very different. (OECD 2013, 22)

Education systems are complex. International comparisons will never be perfect: cultural, political, and socio-economic factors all contribute to varying degrees in each country. (GEMS 2014, 30)

The extensive expression of caveats indicates they are aware of the tension between what is desired and what is feasible. I now move to explore how this

problem is reconciled, balancing the competing demands to demonstrate their expertise and yet develop straightforward solutions.

## Act 2

### The story of control: *buttressing beliefs & (re)interpreting reality*

I have always been fascinated by the search for universal laws and principles that help us understand and act in this complex, volatile and uncertain world in which we live... I was successful because I was able to apply the paradigms and research methods of physics to the world of education where these were generating new insights.

Andreas Schleicher, speaking to the Institute of Physics<sup>36</sup>

Schleicher here expresses both dissatisfaction with the complex and uncertain nature of the world in which we live, and faith that, through the methods of physics, social reality has been brought into a system that renders the stream of being comprehensible. The first step in this process was introduced in the construction of the calculable world. It remains to explore how this system is then used as a basis for generating knowledge of universal laws and principles.

### **Move 3. Restrict the analytic focus**

This section explores the strategies used to maximise *narrative probability*: that is, the question of ‘whether it hangs together’. There are two aspects to this process, which can be clarified by drawing on the ACF’s hierarchy of beliefs. First, coalition members must protect the policy core (causal) beliefs in the form of straightforward explanations that locate causality within school practices and structures. Second, they must demonstrate the relevance of their secondary beliefs over other interpretations. At this stage coalition members begin to deal with the issues associated with transfer directly.

The plot thickens when we reflect on the previous section (*genre knowledge*), whereby coalition members explicitly undermine the policy core beliefs through the inclusion of caveats. This must then be reconciled with the research ambition, a process which evokes the relation between the construction of systems and the (re)interpretation of reality. The following strategies are identified: *focus on quantifiable outcomes*; *focus on high-performing systems*; *confirmatory cases*;

---

<sup>36</sup> Once a Physicist: Andreas Schleicher. *Physics World*, April 2013. Available at: [https://www.iop.org/careers/working-life/profiles/page\\_59785.html](https://www.iop.org/careers/working-life/profiles/page_59785.html) (Last accessed 10.02.2016)

*selective interpretation; incomplete stories; overarching policy levers; and, factors that are amenable to control.*

**a) Focus on quantifiable outcomes: collapsing complexity**

By restricting the focus to the quantifiable outcomes measured by international surveys, broader outcomes and the effects of specific policies, including unintended consequences, are excluded. This preliminary strategy was introduced with regard to the creation of the calculable world. Rappleye (2010) describes how complexity is collapsed in this way (along economic lines) in the context of education and development and how this both frames the way in which the process is conceptualized (marginalizing broader effects of educational interventions), and how causality is then hypothesized ('judgment calls') in the pursuit of 'progress'. Barber's (2014) account of his time with the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) explains how the inquiry is narrowed:

Because we had some targets or goals that were public, we started from the targets. So we worked back from a target... we didn't go into it with a kind of open research point of view where we say what are the many questions we could ask about this data... we're going in with a particular perspective. (21)

The GEMS report (2014) also acknowledges its selectivity:

We have focused on one output (system efficiency), but the choice of this output in each context is an important part of the debate. (30)

Notwithstanding this preliminary narrowing, the features of complex and diverse systems must be harnessed to provide a straightforward narrative that locates explanations inside school systems' practices and/or structures. The following strategies narrow the focus to *cases* that confirm the causal story and to *features* that are amenable to direct control, building on and nuancing the analysis developed in the section *omissions and silences* in Auld and Morris (2014). Many of these strategies are pursued implicitly, and could be predicted by the NPF's assumptions. Other strategies address the issues more explicitly, attempting to ensure the system's internal coherence.

**(b) Focus on high-performing systems**

Analyses may focus on any number of "*high-performing systems*" (e.g. cities, nations, provinces or regions), whereas poor performers are invariably excluded. This streamlining facilitates a straightforward narrative of success. The focus is

often revealed in the title of reports, (e.g. McKinsey 2010a; Grattan 2012), and is clearly stated, for example:

The review represents one of the first attempts to compare school leadership across a range of high-performing education systems. (McKinsey 2010b, 3)

The subsequent chapters present detailed analyses of high-performing education systems - Canada (Ontario), Finland, Singapore, and China (Hong Kong and Shanghai). (OECD 2012, 17)

Greene (2012) notes the basic methodological flaw: *selection on the dependent variable*, and explains, ‘when you look at the things that successful organizations are doing, you have no idea whether each one of those things caused the good outcomes, had no effect on success, or was actually an impediment that held organizations back from being even more successful... by avoiding variation in the dependent variable it prevents any scientific identification of causation’. Alexander (2012) identifies this as a fallacy of division, arguing:

X may well be a common feature of high-performing education systems a, b, c, d and e, but that doesn’t demonstrate a cause-effect relationship between feature and performance. And if x is also a common feature of low-performing systems g, h, i, j and k, then the claimed relationship is clearly inadmissible. (13)

Coffield (2012) points out that many of the ‘best practices’ promoted in the McKinsey (2010a) report were also shared by systems that do not perform well on international surveys. While the McKinsey (2007) report questions ‘why some educational reforms succeed so spectacularly, while most others fail’ (8), there is no analysis of cases in which the identified practices were present but there were no gains in student outcomes. Although the McKinsey (2010a) report concedes the study could be improved through the analysis of ‘matched pairs’ (126), it does not pursue this line of analysis.

The narrative of success is broadened by including ‘most improved systems’ (McKinsey 2010a), or ‘successful reformers’ (OECD 2012; 2013a). The preferred policy intervention is then associated with any improvement in outcomes (success story), regardless of overall performance. Schleicher (2014) goes further, focussing on systems that ‘*do most* to achieve excellence, equity and inclusion’ (11 italics added). Demonstrable improvement is no longer necessary, and the preferred policies are promoted through a narrative of good intentions.

### **c) Confirmatory cases**

By delimiting the analysis to high-performing systems which confirm the causal story, commonalities are presented as ‘best practices’, or ‘what works’. Alexander

(2012) and Coffield (2012) highlight the omission of deviant cases from a number of influential reports, and the habit has been identified at the political level in the form of selective referencing (Morris 2012; Takayama 2010). The selectivity is openly confirmed in McKinsey 2010b:

The education systems in these countries all perform strongly on international tests, or their performance in this respect is improving, and *they demonstrate good practices in school leadership* (4 italics added)

The circularity (they were selected because they demonstrate what is considered good practice) is confirmed:

The international survey conducted as part of this research largely *reconfirms* existing knowledge about the roles which effective school leaders play (7 italics added)

This process of 'selective exposure' (Jones, McBeth et al. 2014, 12) evokes the important distinction between how conclusions are *developed* and how they are *justified* (Majone 1989). Though causal claims may be developed by other means, the symbolic power derived from reference to high-performing systems encourages their use as the *medium of persuasion*, a strategy that encourages confirmatory referencing.

#### **d) Selective confirmation**

The narrative of success (what high-performing systems *do*) is undermined by any variation between the selected cases across the multiple variables. This is particularly evident in exploratory reports, in which multiple lessons are derived from a range of cases. Worlds Apart (1996) confronts the issue directly. Having observed that 'an assertive principal' does not have the expected association with school effectiveness in the Netherlands, it asks:

What is it in the local, regional or national ecology that might explain this finding?... Answering this question inevitably involves the generation of more complex explanations that operate on a number of levels, and is likely to generate more complex theoretical explanations. (5)

The question is duly shelved, a peculiar move given that the authors set themselves the task of identifying 'what factors travel, and why' (6). Such questions are pre-empted by acknowledging and subsequently excluding divergent cases, and then reintroducing them when they support the narrative. Tucker (2011) adopts a similar approach:

We know that the complete transformation of the whole system of policy and

practice we have suggested will seem an overwhelming prospect to many people. So we turn to Canada as our best example of a country that might be used as a source of strategies for making great improvements in the short term. (2)

While it is held up as the 'best example', Canada is subsequently dismissed as an outlier because it does not share the same 'system of gateways' between key periods of educational and employment transition noted in 'virtually all' cases (6). The strategy is repeated throughout:

The curricula and examinations in every country studied for this report, save Canada, were set not just to a very high standard, but to a particular kind of standard. (Tucker 2011, 8)

Towards the end of the report, however, Canada is rehabilitated to support Tucker's *Agenda for American Education*:

We have not mentioned Canada much until now, because this is where it fits. (43)

The strategy reflects ACF's emphasis on 'biased assimilation', whereby individuals 'tend to interpret evidence in a way that supports their prior beliefs and values (Henry 2011, 365). It also presents insight into the general perspective on international comparisons and the nature of social systems, whereby analysis may focus on an isolated aspect of the system rather than the sum of its constituent parts.

### ***e) Incomplete stories***

Rather than draw attention to divergent cases, an *incomplete story* may be constructed, whereby the feature/policy is introduced and then endorsed by a vague number of cases (e.g. 'some', 'most', 'several' 'nearly all'), or by providing examples from specific cases:

In the pages that follow, we will point out when *all* appear to share a policy framework, when *most* do and when *some* do. (Tucker 2011, 2)

Chapters 7 to 12 examine six policy areas and programs that have been integral to the success of *one or several* of the high performing education systems in East Asia. (Grattan Institute 2012, 6)

The chapters then go on to outline the main elements of the country's education system and reforms intended to develop the skills needed for the unpredictable labour market of the future. The elements vary across the education systems described, but *generally include...* (OECD 2012, 17)

PISA shows that, in *nearly all* countries and economies, students who had attended pre-primary school tend to perform better at the age of 15 than pupils who had not attended. (Schleicher 2014, 105)

*In general, principals do not regard books and online resources as major contributors to development. (McKinsey 2010b, 22)*

Selecting and emphasizing features and trends in this way embraces the problem of diversity, orchestrating and overstating agreement, and allowing incomplete stories to be combined to form a coherent master narrative. These incomplete stories are often left to function as *hanging observations* (see below)

#### **f) Focus on overarching policy levers**

While exploratory studies (e.g. McKinsey 2007a, 2010a; Tucker 2011) develop an overview of high-performing systems and then accentuate common features, targeted studies restrict inquiry to an *overarching policy lever*, which is defined by the Grattan Institute (2012) as: ‘an element or characteristic of a system that can be changed in order to achieve a strategic objective’ (29). Common levers are leadership (e.g. McKinsey 2010b), curriculum (e.g. DfE 2012), and teacher quality (e.g. Schleicher 2012). Other reports focus on a number of policy levers but deal with each in turn, in separate sections (e.g. Schleicher 2014). By privileging one overarching policy lever, the significance of other variables may be acknowledged but then dismissed, or dealt with separately. Alternatively, other features may be ignored entirely, but with the concession that the selected policy lever cannot in itself guarantee improved outcomes (see *necessary conditions* below).

By limiting analysis to one overarching lever, reports are better positioned to select high-performing systems that confirm the preferred story. When confronted by variation between cases on the selected policy lever, two main strategies are deployed. First, and as above, coalition members emphasise aspects of these cases that confirm the story while contriving to overlook anomalous characteristics. Alternatively, the variety of policies in different systems are collated under the same authoritative banner, highlighting ‘key’ approaches in selected cases to develop sub-stories. The basic claim is that, despite variation, there remains broad consensus in ‘high-performing’ systems about the significance of the overarching policy lever(s). As Tucker (2011) explains:

*Most of the countries we studied have made strenuous efforts to raise the quality of their teachers in each one of these dimensions. The strategies they have used are sometimes very similar and sometimes very different. (11 italics added)*

Tucker then presents strategies adopted to ensure ‘teacher quality’ from selected cases to advance his agenda. The diversity that emerges within an overarching

policy lever may be presented positively, to illustrate the options available. Schleicher (2012a) notes there are:

... major unresolved issues on effective teacher policies, both within and between countries. (81)

But asserts that:

Summit participants agreed that significant improvement is possible... (and) the many examples of reforms in this publication... show that challenges can be successfully addressed. (81)

The impact of the specific policy actions in these contexts, and how they operate amidst the broader array of social mechanisms, is unexplored. Complexity is subsumed under the authority of the overarching policy lever. This presents insight into how generic policy concepts may adopted and (re)interpreted to promote local agendas, while ostensibly following global trends.

#### ***g) Focus on factors amenable to control***

Advocates must focus explanations on features of education systems that are *amenable to control* (i.e. policy levers) and underplay broader influences on student outcomes (e.g. culture, history, or private tuition). The Grattan (2012) report provides an example:

Success in high-performing education systems in East Asia is not always the result of spending more money... Nor is success culturally determined, a product of Confucianism, rote learning or Tiger Mothers. (2)

Neither cultural difference nor Confucian values can explain how, in just five years, Hong Kong moved from 17th to 2nd in PIRLS (the international assessment of Grade 4 students' reading literacy)... Success is also not driven by the size of the system... the four high-performing education systems in East Asia vary in size... High performance in education systems in East Asia comes from effective education strategies that focus on implementation and well-designed programs that continuously improve learning and teaching. (12)

The improvement in outcomes is used to dismiss the significance of conditions outside schools (even as *enabling factors*), with *any* variation between the cases on certain variables (e.g. size) used to infer that they have had *no influence* on outcomes. In contrast, differences in the 'education strategies' across contexts are accommodated within the narrative as options available to policymakers. Furthermore, the evidence that East Asian heritage students perform well even when educated outside these high-performing East Asian systems is overlooked (see Feniger and Lefstein 2014). As highlighted above, the Grattan (2012) report

derives authority for these assertions through appeal to its expert consultants, and the insider perspective of East Asian representatives.

Most reports contain a ritual genuflection to context (see *genre knowledge*). The OECD (2005) indicates awareness of the problem:

From the perspective of school improvement it is important to separate the effects of contextual factors and factors that are directly amenable to education policy. (94)

A serious problem with regard to the interpretation of the results of the analyses relates to the possible overlap between how much variance in student performance is explained by background or contextual variables and policy-amenable school characteristics. (112)

Elsewhere, the OECD (2004) states that the single strongest factor influencing students' academic performance on PISA is socioeconomic differences, and more recently (2010) it states that 77% of between school differences in performance in England can be explained by differences in socio-economic background. Gorard (2010) notes how this conflict is dealt with in SER, claiming that researchers 'have accepted that much or most of the variation in school outcomes is due to school intake characteristics. But they have claimed that the residual variation... is, or can be, evidence of differential school effectiveness' (746). The OECD generally adopts the same approach, emphasizing that *improvement is possible* (see *appeal to other systems*). In a recent blog (2014)<sup>37</sup>, however, Schleicher asserts that PISA shows that 'school systems trump family background'.

Contextual elements such as family background are distinguished from factors that are amenable to control, which are described as 'operational elements' (OECD 2012, 23). These operational elements are further disaggregated into constituent (but related) parts. The move compartmentalizes complex systems into discrete elements, acknowledging but then subordinating contextual influences and complexity, and thereby legitimising the above strategies which are used to develop straightforward causal stories. This fundamental move underpins the OECD's promotion of industrial benchmarking. Having streamlined these cases, it remains to make a causal connection between the identified feature and system outcomes.

---

<sup>37</sup> Schleicher, A (2014). *School systems trump family background*, Available at: <http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/school-systems-trump-family-background.html> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)

#### ***Move 4. Drawing recommendations: making causal inferences***

Having narrowed the focus of explanations onto the selected feature(s), reports move to develop policy recommendations. Unless a causal claim can be made, the foundations of the enterprise are undermined. Here I identify strategies used to deal directly with the core issue:

*While cross national data on pupil performance may 'reveal' an array of possible correlations and associations, it provides no direct basis for establishing the causal connections required to support the isolation and transfer of 'best practices'.*

Commonly, a paradoxical sequence of moves unfolds as advocates simultaneously eschew direct causal claims whilst identifying policies for transfer.

#### ***Step one: highlight the issues***

The first step anticipates criticism by highlighting limitations and providing caveats (see *genre knowledge* above). Few discuss the problems of establishing causal relationships explicitly. Unlike the issues of culture and context, this cannot easily be recast as a secondary consideration, and once acknowledged it is not easily marginalized. Further issues: conceptual (e.g. the commensurability of education systems); practical (e.g. sampling; translation); and technical (e.g. how data is aggregated and presented), are generally omitted. Including them would merely undermine the frame.

#### ***Step two: overcome the issues***

The second step reveals a number of strategies. These are: *outsourcing and established knowledge*; *reject/marginalise caveats*; and, *circumvent caveats*. These enable advocates to deliver the communicative purpose while protecting themselves from critique.

#### ***a) Outsourcing and "established knowledge"***

By attributing causal claims to other actors and/or reports, or to "what we/everybody already know/s", responsibility for dealing with issues is bypassed. This move often justifies the focus on an overarching policy lever in targeted studies, but may also be used to support specific claims. The McKinsey (2010b) report, *Capturing the Leadership Premium*, is illustrative. The *Leadership Premium* is a construct of the authors, implying the existence of a universally applicable, but elusive, formula for developing 'effective' educational leaders (determined by student outcomes).

The report begins by establishing the policy lever's centrality: 'officials in each of the systems [they] studied agree... [leadership] is crucial to outcomes' (5) and asserts the 'policy position is based on a *growing body of evidence* demonstrating the impact of effective school leadership' (5), which is 'consistent across a large number of countries and contexts' (5). Sources to support the claim are not provided, but precedents from other sectors place the policy lever's central importance beyond doubt:

While... still a subject of debate in education, [leadership's] significance is now taken for granted in business, politics, the military, and almost every other area of public life. (6)

Though school leadership may well influence student outcomes, the nature and degree of the influence is less clear. Barker (2007), for example, asserts that 'few (school effectiveness) studies suggest that school leaders have more than a small, indirect impact on achievement' (21). Emphasising the 'absence of hard evidence of leaders producing substantial improvements in school and pupil outcomes' (22), Barker notes a growing body of qualitative research that highlights a more complex relationship, as well as the adverse effects of judging leadership quality according to impact on student performance tables.

Across reports, claims such as 'the evidence suggests' (McKinsey 2010b, 12), or 'the evidence shows' (Schleicher 2009, 261), are often presented without any reference to the sources of this evidence. The strategy allows advocates to leverage their expertise, asserting their authority without revealing the source of their knowledge. In time, selected policy levers (such as 'leadership' or 'quality teaching') become axiomatic trends, falling into the realm of "what everybody knows". For example:

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Korea and Singapore all focus on the things that *are known to matter* in the classroom, including a relentless, practical focus on learning, and the creation of a strong culture of teacher education, research, collaboration, mentoring, feedback and sustained professional development. (Grattan Institute 2012, 2)

The high-performing systems originally positioned as the focus of analysis are not used to develop the causal story, but are invoked to confirm what is *known to matter*. The selected practices are then bestowed with causal influence through their association with key levers that are *known* to have an influence.

Barber (2009) presents another example, introducing the concept of system effectiveness, and claiming that 'we are developing globally a comprehensive knowledge base about system reform and increasing numbers of system leaders

– though still a minority – are applying it’ (16 italics added). He continues, ‘Let me... highlight just a few of the resounding messages from the global knowledge base I mentioned’ (17). These messages are again promoted as established knowledge, for example, ‘we know that devolving power budgets, along with accountability, to school level works’ (17-18 italics added).

When sources *are* provided, they are generally taken from publications from the same genre, which use common features, strong associations, or what systems *tend to do* to identify ‘best practices’. The McKinsey (2007b) report states that, ‘it’s no secret that the quality of teaching is one of the most successful determinants of the way students perform’ (40), while Pearson (2013) claims that ‘Michael (Barber) and his former colleagues demonstrated in the 2007 McKinsey report... that the quality of teaching is the most important factor influencing a student’s learning’ (28). IPPR (2012) provides a model example:

As a result of international benchmarking, there is growing knowledge of how to reform education systems successfully... At the school level, this knowledge is set out in three major reports McKinsey’s 2007 (Barber and Mourshed)... McKinsey’s 2010 (Mourshed, Chijioke et al.)... and Marc Tucker’s 2011 book. (58)

A table combining the “knowledge” contained in these reports is then presented with the title: ‘The building blocks of world-class education systems: what we already know’ (59). The McKinsey reports have been widely critiqued (e.g. Alexander 2010; Coffield 2012) and Tucker’s 2011b book is an edited collection, providing descriptive overviews of high-performing systems. Greene (2012) points out that as the chapters follow no discernable method, we must trust ‘that [the authors] have correctly identified the relevant factors and have properly perceived the causal relationships’.

Tucker’s report (2011a) is adapted from the final two chapters of his edited book (2011b), and is based on what *some*, *most* and *nearly all* systems do across a series of *key levers*:

What follows is a new agenda... derived from the experience of the countries that have consistently outperformed the United States. It was constructed simply by taking the subsection headings and reframing the language of the preceding sections in the form of an action agenda. (Tucker 2011, 40)

In short, non-specific sources are used to develop a descriptive (and partial) overview of ‘what systems do’ on selected policy levers. This portrayal of ‘what *is*’, is then reframed to advocate ‘what *ought* to be done’. This is then referenced by IPPR (2012) to establish ‘what we already know’. It is now apt to revisit the implications of this process of self-referencing, identified by Silova and Brehm

(2015), in which they observe that ‘a hypothesis that has been tested in earlier research becomes cited as a proven and taken-for-granted reality... without critical engagement with alternative explanations’ (27). In this way, speculative hypotheses are advanced and then inflated to the status of established knowledge, or ‘what everybody knows’.

***b) Reject or marginalise limitations/caveats***

While broader influences on education outcomes may be dismissed outright when streamlining explanations (see *focus on factors ‘amenable to control’*), they may also be dealt with when presenting recommendations. By accepting and then rejecting limitations, critique is pre-empted and factors outside school are recast as secondary concerns. The strategy is deployed across each of the featured McKinsey reports. For example, the McKinsey (2007a) report notes that causality is often attributed to factors outside the control of decision makers, such as ‘history’ and ‘culture’ (16). These opinions are duly dismissed:

Our benchmarking suggests that the same broad policies are effective in different school systems irrespective of the cultural context in which they are applied. (16)

Thus, although the nature of this benchmarking is never explained, the focus on system features and practices is preserved through bold assertion. The conclusions (43) acknowledge that ‘in many cases, extraneous factors hold back change’, ‘context, culture, politics and governance’ and ‘the point of departure’ will determine approaches and outcomes (43). And yet the authors maintain:

None of these factors will be as important to the school system and its leaders as [their] three guiding principles. (43)

Contextual and methodological caveats are thereby highlighted and then dismissed as second-order considerations. In McKinsey 2010a, a similar pattern emerges:

Because no two systems face exactly the same challenges, it is very difficult to draw parallels between them, or to see the wood from the trees...

Nonetheless:

What our analysis reveals is that despite their different contexts, improving school systems appear to adopt a similar set of interventions, one that is appropriate to their stage of the journey... this is not to say that context is not unimportant, but it is secondary to getting the fundamentals right. (11)

Caveats are repeated throughout:

Each system's journey is different: each school system starts from a different point, faces different expectations, and operates in a different social and political context. (18)

When explaining certain improvements in outcomes, it concedes:

There can be no simple answer to this question, other than to say that [it] is the outcome of their socioeconomic, political, and cultural context. (68)

The report further notes that the precise interventions required may vary across contexts, depending on their situation/history/culture (e.g. 35). Yet it offers the platitude that 'a school system can improve from any starting point' (18), and maps out intervention clusters to effect such improvement at key stages. These interventions, it claims, are effective 'irrespective of geography, time, or culture' (25). The McKinsey (2010b) report exhibits similar dissonance:

It is important to recognize that there are contextual differences between systems, and that what works in one system may not work in another... the examples here should be taken as sources of insight and ideas, not as proven best practices which can be universally applied. *At the same time though, most of the evidence we have reviewed suggests that good leadership is the same irrespective of contexts and that "what works" is surprisingly consistent.* (3 italics added)

The Grattan (2012) report's dismissal of variables beyond its focus is followed with a presentation of policies pursued in *one or several* of the systems. The overview outlines six policy areas before asserting: 'no country can import another's culture, but these six programs have been the focus of reform in many systems throughout the world' (6). Here the issue of culture-context is acknowledged but dismissed, and causality is bypassed with a vague appeal to international trends, and precedent in other systems.

### **c) Circumvent limitations/caveats**

Rather than reject or marginalise caveats directly, they may be circumvented, giving the impression that the advocate is respecting limitations while delivering the research ambition indirectly. This strategy involves three distinct sub strategies (*hanging observations; softening the ambition; and, mystique & obfuscation*).

#### **(i) Hanging observations**

Rather than make an explicit causal statement, attention is drawn to a correlation, providing a *hanging observation* that leaves readers to make the causal inference. While the OECD (2012) explicitly rejects the possibility of

identifying causal relationships, it outlines ways in which PISA can be used to improve education systems (22-23). One such application is as follows:

PISA can help governments to optimise existing policies or consider more fundamental alternatives when researchers combine *advanced forms of educational assessment with sophisticated survey research methods...* By linking these two bodies of data one can associate certain patterns of student performance with a multitude of background data... (23 italics in original text)

In this way, while the causal nature of such relationships might not be established, an extensive web of correlations can be drawn between certain dimensions of student performance and a large range of factors that *could conceivably affect* that performance. (23 italics added)

The report then appeals to industrial benchmarking techniques, and states:

The aim in this report is to relate differences in student achievement between one country and another to certain features of those countries' education systems. (23)

Elsewhere, the OECD (2013b) adopts a similar approach, highlighting a 'network of correlations' that can be used as 'a resource for decision making' (190). Valverde (2014) refers to this strategy as 'data inspired speculation' (486), a process which evokes Markkanen and Schroder's (1989) portrayal of scientific 'hedging', as any 'non-direct strategy of saying less than one means' (171). The practice is used to express uncertainty in propositions (Hyland 1998), thereby 'enable[ing] writers to refer to speculative possibilities while guarding against possible criticism' (443). The OECD (2013a) compares the USA with systems that perform well, or which are rapidly improving, clarifying the extent of its ambition:

While PISA cannot identify cause-and-effect relationships between policies/practices and student outcomes, it can show educators, policy makers and the interested public *how education systems are similar and different.* (14)

These hanging observations allow the response to any challenge: *we merely noted the common features of high-performing systems, we neither attributed causality nor promoted policy transfer.* When a number of high-profile academics published an open letter<sup>38</sup> claiming that PISA was narrowing the focus of education, and specifically questioned the OECD's endorsement of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) in the U.S., Schleicher responded:

---

<sup>38</sup> OECD and PISA tests are damaging education worldwide - academics, *The Guardian* online, 06.05.2014. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/06/oecd-pisa-tests-damaging-education-academics> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

*All we said was that Common Core Standards are in line with what they have in high-performing countries. We have empirical evidence for that. (Schleicher, quoted in Wilby 2014, italics added)*

Given the OECD's status and influence, such observations will inevitably be construed as prescriptions of 'best practice'. Schleicher adopts a similar approach in his promotional work. For example:

A cross-national international assessment such as PISA cannot identify clear-cut cause-and-effect relationships... (but) it can identify which factors appear empirically to be "universal" features supporting good quality learning at school and which factors are specific to particular cultures or systems (2009, 252-254)

This presents insight into how the paradigms and methods of physics are used to divine the universal characteristics of good education. Elsewhere, Schleicher (2014) offers 'pointers for policy and practice', drawing on PISA 2012 and other OECD reports (*outsourcing*) and asserting that 'the analysis is complemented with examples that illustrate proven or promising practices in specific countries' (17). How the identified practices have been *proven* to work is unclear, while a focus on *promising* practices bypasses the need for demonstrable impact. Despite such ambiguity, the veiled policy recommendations derived from the OECD's data are widely cited as authoritative. Grattan (2012) illustrates how hanging observations are inflated into causal claims:

Two additional factors emphasise classroom management skills: the proportion of classroom time that is actually used for effective learning and teaching, and, school and classroom climate. The evidence shows that these are *universal qualities* of good teaching, and improve student learning. (16)

Two OECD reports (2008; 2010b) are cited as evidence. They highlight correlations, do not make universal claims, and do not make direct connections between the attitudes, beliefs or conditions identified by teachers in the surveys and actual improvement within the systems. Regardless, the claims are platitudes: more classroom time devoted to 'effective' learning would surely 'improve' student learning, and 'good teaching' is defined by its impact on student learning.

If the aim is merely to 'stimulate discussion' (OECD 2013b, 190), however, the actual policies highlighted (or their causal influence) are largely irrelevant, and the promotion of speculative possibilities serves to focus education debate around the PISA data. This strategy of *loading* the frame is implicit in Schleicher's ready endorsement of studies that make questionable (and often conflicting) 'best practice' claims (e.g. McKinsey 2007; GEMS 2014). Rather than challenge the

frame, researchers are drawn into speculative exchanges regarding the reasons for high performance.

***(ii) Softening the ambition***

Worlds Apart (1996) acknowledges the problems of translation (11), of sampling (12), and the importance of context (11). The reader is then assured that ‘it is with such caveats in mind that we approach our review of the studies’ (13). In an easily-overlook passage, the report states that the analysis ‘represents an attempt not to test hypotheses... but rather to generate them’ (1). This softer ambition ostensibly responds to the limitations and caveats, positioning the authors in the middle ground. Whereas testing hypotheses requires in-depth study and will likely produce complex explanations, the authors can generate hypotheses that are more easily translated into clear – if speculative – policy lessons.

Though these hypotheses may provide a basis for further investigation, or be left as *hanging observations*, the *logic of action* (crisis, precedent, and derision) is then employed to argue that ‘limited experimentation with non-British practice is long overdue’ (59). The softening of the ambition therefore serves to assuage critics, while speculative observations – along with the crisis-fuelled imperative for experimentation – are used to promote experimental policy transfer. These speculative hypotheses are still widely referenced as ‘evidence’ to support policy approaches, including documents that informed the recent review of the National curriculum in England (e.g. DfE 2012; Oates 2014).

***iii) Mystique and obfuscation***

Whereas established knowledge involves an appeal to the authority of other sources, this implicit obfuscation relates to advocates’ individual processes of inference. Any attempt to identify how the actual causal relation between specific education practices and structures and the desirable outcome was established is concealed within an impenetrable black box. This is particularly apparent in the case of celebrity comparativists, who promote a coherent and consistent formula that is based on the lessons distilled from their extensive experience. As Tucker (2011) states:

After 22 years of research on the factors that account for the success of the countries with the best education record, I find myself convinced that seven things account for the lion’s share of the difference... (35)

Barber (2009) states that he is awake to the errors made by system leaders, 'partly because I see them all around the world, but also because, at one time or another, I have made most of them myself' (19). Hargreaves (2012) adapts third-age rhetoric to promote 'The Fourth Way', the heretofore pinnacle of system reform. Though it is 'not meant to be prescriptive... or a template to replicate' (16), it is nonetheless presented as a 'comprehensive and systemic approach to educational change' (15). Hargreaves begins by mapping out the preceding three ages of education reform: innovation and inconsistency; markets and standardization; and, performance and partnership. Having highlighted the reasons underlying their failure, or exhaustion, he moves to promote the Fourth Way, which 'espouses more solid principles and pillars for educational change and which offers greater hope for a sustainable future' (11). The Fourth Way is derived from:

... extensive research of high-performing systems, school districts and networks' comprising a study of Finland's educational system, of a network of 300 secondary schools in England, of the province of Alberta in Canada and of the Tower Hamlets school district in UK. (11)

And, from this straightforward narrative of success:

... it has been possible to discern and distil a set of powerful principles of educational change that these extraordinarily successful yet also quite varied systems hold in common. (11)

These principles are presented as The Fourth Way. Singapore, 'one of the world's most admired cities' (8), is then used to confirm the advocated principles:

These brief examples illustrate how Singapore is very much driving along the path of the Fourth Way and perhaps even defining it for others. (16)

We must trust that the expert has discerned the correct causal relationships from the available material. This is not to insinuate that a researchers' experience should be disregarded altogether. It merely highlights one way in which the problem of causality is circumvented. The strategy erodes any notion of a standardised or objective method within the genre, and the legitimacy and universal nature of explanations becomes a matter of faith. The problem is complicated by the proliferation of experts, each drawing on their own pool of experience, and each promoting their path to salvation as devoutly as the next. It is apt to briefly consider the consequences with regard to the array of solutions promoted.

***The ocean of facts: notes on the path(s) to salvation***

I have highlighted how advocates circumvent the issues to deliver the communicative purpose. As Demszky and Nassehi (2014) explain, the question is ‘not whether a particular statement is true or false, but whether or not it is acknowledged in a particular situation as knowledge’ (116). The contemporary approach to governance demands authoritative knowledge claims that provide simple, well-packaged answers, which are expressed with certainty and from which straightforward causal narratives can be developed. In short: “without a straightforward policy story you are just another researcher with some data”. Table 6 (below) presents just some of the policy areas and practices presented across the featured reports.

The versatility of the sub-stories can be related to the nature of the approach, which is premised on identifying the common features of systems that perform well on comparative assessment surveys. Voegelin’s (1952) critique of political science anticipates the results:

The use of method as the criterion of science abolishes theoretical relevance. As a consequence, all propositions concerning facts will be promoted to the dignity of science, regardless of their relevance, as long as they result from a correct use of method. Since the ocean of facts is infinite, a prodigious expansion of science in the sociological sense becomes possible, giving employment to scientific technicians and leading to the fantastic accumulation of irrelevant knowledge through huge “research projects” whose most interesting feature is the quantifiable expense that has gone into their production. (8)

The problem is exacerbated in the case of the NP. Just as the policy core is ensconced within an array of defensive fortifications, empirical anomalies are easily ignored or dismissed, allowing advocates to promote their preferred policies without fear of negation. The focus of knowledge claims often follow established trends, or reflect actors’ own experiences, professional-educational background and/or agenda. Two statements regarding the process of discovery are revealing:

The data is pretty raw stuff, isn’t it? And it’s open. There’s normally more than one possible interpretation of data. So you bring your own perspective. (Barber 2014, 81)

Where [Schleicher] is brilliant, is to conclude. He is fantastic in this... He is the conclusions expert - they are in before the meeting... It is very convenient. (European Commission actor, quoted in Grek 2014)

The practice reflects what Bloor (1982) refers to as ‘the priority of the informal over the formal’, whereby ‘formal structures (of syllogisms) are connected to actual inferences by an interpretive process’. In such cases, formal logic is used

'to strengthen and justify... predetermined conclusions by casting them in a deductive mode' (118-119). As highlighted in Chapter IV, many of the sub-stories are compatible and mutually reinforcing, supporting the general emphasis on standardization and privatization (e.g. curriculum and assessment; textbooks; performance management). Drawing on Kaplan's (1986) criteria for narrative quality, this may be described as *coalition unity*.

This unity is compromised when celebrity comparativists develop conflicting visions, with each emphasising their experience and instances in which the approach has *worked*. Michael Fullan confronts the issue directly in his article titled, *Large-Scale Reform Comes of Age* (2009), in which he traces the evolution of 'the new leadership paradigm' through three successive ages. Though he concedes that the paradigm has not fully matured, certainly it is perceived to be on the right track, and Fullan concludes by asserting that 'finally we have system reform that has great promise' (112). Regarding the contrasting sects, Fullan first invokes established knowledge on key levers, and then reflects on the differences:

Everyone agrees that high quality teachers are critical, and that leaders and teachers working together focusing on student learning and achievement is essential. But there are sharp differences concerning the policies and strategies for reaching these outcomes. (107)

There are sharp differences concerning what reformers choose to emphasize. Compare, for example, Barber and Hargreaves, both long-standing and intensive students and practitioners of system reform. Barber... stresses the need for system leadership along with capacity building. He claims that system reform is no longer about the right agenda but about actually implementing it... For Hargreaves there is too much command and control in Barber's solution (and for Barber I suspect Hargreaves' recommendations leave too much to chance). (108-109)

Ultimately, Fullan, who has provided endorsements for Barber (McKinsey 2010a), and has co-authored system change manuals with Hargreaves (e.g. Hargreaves and Fullan 2012), is stoic about these differences, asserting that, 'this is all good stuff in that we are all playing in the same area' (109). It remains to be seen whether these rival priests will reconcile their sects into one authoritative canon, or whether they will each attract and inspire generations of partisan disciples. Alternatively, it may fall to a new thinker to develop a new periodization, a task which has been taken up by a number of commentators within the school improvement movement.

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) predicted the coming of the Third Age of school effectiveness, in which the schools adopting best practices would result in large-scale 'experiments of nature' that would solve the remaining conundrums.

Hopkins, Harris et al. (2010) have subsequently parsed the school improvement movement's evolution into five phases, culminating in systemic reform. Faced with the ocean of facts, and repeated failure to deliver the promised gains in outcomes, every now and again a thinker will draw a line under the movement and let start history anew with their own work. As Voegelin (1952) noted, it is impossible to arrive at a critically justified periodization, as each of the 'waves has as good a claim to consider itself the great wave of the future as any other' (134).

**Table 6. Illustrative overview of themes and policies/practices in sample reports<sup>39</sup>**

Author/Organisation	Themes and/or policy levers	Examples of specific policies/practices
OECD	Curriculum; school governance; teachers; leadership; standards; early learning; resources and investment;	Standardised curriculum (e.g. CCSM); autonomy and accountability; strong central capacity and authority; high quality teachers and leaders/principals; diagnosis and early intervention; cohesive, systematic, and continuous approach to improvement; autonomy over curriculum and assessments
Schleicher	Inclusive education design, practices, and resourcing; curriculum and assessment	Limit tracking and streaming; manage school choice; direct resources to disadvantaged areas and students; integrate PISA elements into curriculum; freedom for schools, with accountability;
McKinsey & Company	Literacy and numeracy (standards); data and accountability foundation; teachers and principals	Central control over school processes; scripted lesson; coaching on the curriculum; incentives for high-performance; external coaches; time on task; comprehensive data systems; school inspections & inspection institutions; student streaming
Michael Barber	Leadership; teaching; system organisation; standards; performance management.	Teacher quality over teacher numbers; skilled, aspirational educational leadership at every level; autonomy with accountability; track progress; Well-educated=E(K+T+L)
Grattan Institute	Initial teacher education; school principal education; induction and mentoring; classroom observation; implementation	Entrance exams for teachers; high subject knowledge in initial training; school principals rotated; international and industry visits; matching leaders to the right schools; mentor teachers; learning communities; presentations by exemplary teachers
IPPR 2012	Leadership; teaching; efficiency; effectiveness; innovation; standards;	Set high standards; monitor whether they are being achieved; well-trained, well-selected teachers, principals and head teachers; cut bureaucracy; public private partnerships (PPPs).
GEMS	Teacher pay vs. class size (efficiency index)	Only teacher salaries and student/teacher ratios statistically significant (material) impact on PISA. Finland and SK pay more and have greater class sizes (most efficient)
Hargreaves	Leadership; system change (pillars, principles, and coherence)	Inspiring and inclusive vision; public engagement; investment; responsible corporate involvement; attract/retain high quality teachers; dynamic role of teachers unions and associations; sustainable leadership; integrating networks; responsibility over accountability; differentiation and diversity.
Tucker	Standards; curriculum and assessment; teaching force; equity; productivity; coherence	International benchmarking; teacher quality; aligned instructional systems and external - gateway- examinations; getting all students to those standards; professional systems of work organization; coherence; autonomy with accountability

<sup>39</sup> Due to the high volume of policies and practices promoted in the featured publications, it was not practical to include an exhaustive overview. The above table is used to illustrate the variety of explanations that characterises *the ocean of facts*.

### ***Move 5. Qualifying recommendations***

The preceding stages identified a series of strategies used to streamline explanations and to overcome the problem of causality. Here I explore four strategies (*necessary conditions; knowledge is contextual; the burden of implementation; knowledge is imperfect*) that serve to qualify the status of policy recommendations, serving to both address the limitations and to provide a set of waivers. While these qualifications may be portrayed as an appropriate acknowledgement of limitations, they are effectively used to co-opt critique, buttressing the policy core while using the *logic of action* to promote speculative causal claims as 'best practices'. In the context of the NP's storyline, these qualifications protect the *teleological* component from collapsing if/when interventions fail to move systems/individuals closer to the promised state of perfection.

#### **a) *Necessary (but not sufficient) conditions***

Designating an intervention as a *necessary (but not sufficient) condition* to effect improvement allows advocates to acknowledge complexity while asserting that the identified causal relation is a constant and transferrable principle. For example:

This focus on instruction, though a necessary condition, is in itself insufficient to bring about system improvement. (McKinsey 2007, 27)

The second [aspect] is the set of interventions necessary to make the desired improvements in student outcomes (McKinsey 2010a, 18)

These are not characteristics to select or not as a matter of political choice; rather they are necessary elements of a truly innovative society (IPPR 2102, 22)

In all these ways, the experience in the two cities (Singapore and Hong Kong) reflects the kind of reform in education that appears to be necessary and essential worldwide as the economy advances (OECD 2012, 171)

The strategy serves three related functions. First, it provides a powerful tool in the context of advocacy, not only implying that: (a) the selected intervention 'works' (and is transferrable); but also that, (b) the desired improvement *cannot be achieved* unless the identified *necessary* intervention is introduced. Flew (1975) clarifies the implications:

When such and such is being said to be not the logically but the causally necessary condition of this or that, then it is being said that, in the world as it actually is, with the laws of nature as they actually are, this or that could not in fact be produced without first producing or having such and such. (40-41)

Such deterministic claims are easily undermined by the production of a solitary counterexample, and these are readily available even in the array of explanations promoted by coalition members. The strategy, a search for credibility ‘by appeal to notions culled from the philosophy of science’ (Barnes and Edge 1982, 246), is persuasive but always unfounded. If the relationship is portrayed as probabilistic, it must be accompanied by an account of the contingent events that derailed the chain from its expected course in deviant cases (Mahoney 2003).

Second, the move allows advocates to promote policies while withholding guarantees of success. Failure can be attributed to the intervention not being enacted correctly, or failure to select the combination of interventions that together would be *sufficient* to effect the desired improvement (see *burden of implementation*). Finally, the strategy enhances coalition unity, minimizing the likelihood of conflict with other advocates, who hold different secondary beliefs (i.e. policy preferences).

### ***b) Knowledge is contextual***

Though explanations are streamlined to omit culture and context, advocates stress that ‘best practices’ must be interpreted and enacted with sensitivity to the context. Flexible recommendations are thereby provided, which incorporate caveats and protect the policy core. For example:

This report attempts to disaggregate the various elements of what makes a school system improve, to parse exactly what one system can learn from another, and how to adjust these elements to the specific, local context. (McKinsey 2010a, 11)

By identifying the characteristics of high-performing education systems... PISA allows governments and educators to identify effective practices that they can then adapt to their local contexts. (OECD 2013a, 13; 2013b, 3)

It is up to policy makers in each system to consider the applicability of these reforms to their systems and, in particular, which aspects are more (and less) suited to their needs and context. (Grattan Institute 2012, 63)

Israel has a long tradition of successful innovation, laid out above, which it could bring to bear on a uniquely Israeli education challenge. The national mentality to identify the best of the world and immediately adapt it to a local context is an ideal foundation for systemic innovation. (Pearson 2013, 30)

Naturally, these examples are taken from specific contexts, so the extent to which they can be applied in different contexts will vary. (Schleicher 2014, 17)

How precisely the context was influential or how practices can be re-contextualised is neither explored nor explained, and the onus for successful

interpretation and implementation is located with local policymakers. This is typified by the McKinsey (2010a) reports question: 'is there a point at which a system compromises the intervention cluster by excessively contextualizing the interventions?' (112). In fact, this concern is largely irrelevant, as once 'best practices' have been abstracted from their original context, policymakers are left with an incomplete basis from which to begin any process of 'translation'. More fundamentally, the move implicitly elevates speculative and provisional causal claims (e.g. hanging observations) to absolute status by shifting attention to the pragmatics of transfer.

### **c) The burden of implementation**

This strategy locates responsibility for the success of interventions with governments and education leaders. For example, it may be asserted that an intervention failed because the selected policies were not *sufficient* to effect the desired change, or because they were not implemented or contextualized appropriately. In other words: 'if the rain does not come it is because the dance was improper or because an enemy has danced the rain away again' (Walker 1963, 144). The McKinsey (2010a) report acknowledges that 'systems that have been unsuccessful in trying to improve may carry out the same interventions that successful systems undertake' (26), but then states that such systems have failed to carry out the interventions appropriately.

IPPR (2012) warns that 'systems... need to become more adept at generating, identifying and scaling innovation internally' (61), while the Grattan Institute (2012) identifies the elements for initiating behavioural change, *all* of which are required for successful implementation (21). It then notes the importance of 'political will', stating that 'bureaucrats, teachers, parents and students may be fearful, and reluctant to change' (22). If reforms fail, blame can first be directed towards a lack of political will, and then be shifted down onto one of the aforementioned 'resistance groups'.

The OECD (2013a) repeatedly states the aim of investigating whether '*faithful* implementation' of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) will raise PISA scores in the US, finally offering a qualified response: it is 'intuitively plausible' that 'faithfully implementing the CCSSM would improve PISA results (90). We can assume that if the projected outcome gains do not materialize the recommendation was not implemented faithfully, were confounded by resistance groups, or we were misled by our plausible intuitions. If

outcomes improve, however, we might conclude that basing students' learning on a specific test will raise their performance on that test.

While the focus on enactment and attention to context is clearly important, the strategy again implicitly elevates speculative claims to the status of actual knowledge, and effectively renders 'best practices' infallible. While gains in outcomes are used to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions, blame for any failure to improve outcomes is located elsewhere within the system.

#### ***d) Knowledge is imperfect***

Finally, the refrain that *knowledge is imperfect* both creates space to promote contrary recommendations in future reports, and guards against negation. Advocates may note the imperfect nature of knowledge claims (e.g. McKinsey 2010a), present policies as 'promising' (OECD 2014), as 'hypotheses' meriting 'experimentation' (Worlds Apart 1996), or make direct concessions, such as: 'we still do not fully understand how to ensure consistent leadership across systems' (McKinsey 2010b, 5); and, 'Singapore offers further insights that may challenge or add to the key principles of the Fourth Way' (Hargreaves 2011, 16).

Any policymaker who finds that the 'best practices' used to inform interventions have been 'updated', can be reminded that knowledge is provisional. Prior to the conclusion of the McKinsey (2010a) report, a full page is devoted to a quotation from William James (1907):

To begin with, our knowledge grows in spots. The spots may be large or small, but the knowledge never grows all over: some old knowledge always remains what it was. Your knowledge of pragmatism, let us suppose, is growing now. Later, its growth may involve considerable modification of opinions which you previously held to be true. But such modifications are apt to be gradual. (122)

The quotation serves two purposes. First, it offsets the speculative nature of the report's conclusions. Although causal knowledge is imperfect, the report's conclusions may still be presented as a valid - if transient - form of knowledge. Phillips and Burbules (2000) note that 'it can be argued that it is irrational not to be guided by the best knowledge that is available at the time, *for currently this knowledge is warranted*' (32). Yet they later argue that what counts as support of a theory is that 'no evidence can be found to *disprove* the account that is being given' (80). Moreover, it is the advocate's responsibility to demonstrate that such evidence has been sought.

Second, the recommendations can be promoted as normative 'best practices', while simultaneously allowing analysts to promote contrary recommendations in

future. For example, whereas the McKinsey (2007) report suggested that school autonomy was not associated with high performance, the McKinsey (2010a) report cites school autonomy as one of the primary factors explaining high performance. This provides insight into the way in which secondary beliefs may be strategically amended to dovetail with broader trends, to better complement the advocate's agenda, or perhaps to reflect a genuine reappraisal of the empirical evidence. As the McKinsey (2010a) report states:

Schools systems are constantly changing, so what worked a few years ago might well have little relevance today. (11)

This perfectly captures the industry's endless capacity for reinvention. The attitude has certain commercial advantages, allowing school improvement packages to be updated at any time, perhaps paving the way for the sort of seasonal releases now common in electronics and other tech industries. Any system leader who has been using last season's improvement package to embark on a process of whole-system reform may be reminded that knowledge is apt to change, and then informed that their competitors have recently upgraded to the newer, more efficient package.

The appeal provides the final element of *the logic of action*: (i) change is preferable to maintaining the status quo (see *constructed paranoia & crisis rhetoric*); and (ii) scientific knowledge is necessarily imperfect; therefore, (iii) it is most rational to pursue the required change based on current best conceptions of knowledge, even though causal explanations are imperfect and are apt (and likely) to change. The more compelling the crisis, the more likely a reader will accept knowledge claims that are not strictly warranted (Oxley, Vedlitz et al. 2014, 256). Appeals to precedent, the derision of non-believers, and an emphasis on actor expertise reinforce the logic.

### Act 3

#### ***Fortunate or fatal?***

*We see how every story, however mildly or emphatically, has been leading its central figure or figures in one of two directions. Either they end, as we say, happily, with a sense of liberation, fulfilment and completion. Or they end unhappily, in some form of discomfiture frustration or death.*

(Booker 2004, 18)

#### ***Move 6. Present the idealised and/or tragic futures***

The vision of the idealized future is generally laid out in conjunction with the imagined ordinary. The OECD states that the organisation ‘is about the power of human ideas coming together from all around the world working together towards the same goal - for a better world economy.’<sup>40</sup> It highlights its role in addressing policymakers’ concern with ‘equipping citizens with the skills necessary to achieve their full potential, participate in an increasingly interconnected global economy, and ultimately convert better jobs into better lives’ (2013b, 3). Other reports vary in the breadth and grandeur of their vision, but at the very least, they will offer a fragment of the fortunate (or fatal) fate that awaits if the necessary action is (or is not) taken. Some examples:

A forward-looking, national approach to education reform will be necessary to maintain universal high standards across Israel. There is no other choice in the 21st century, where high quality universal education has become the lynchpin of a successful society and thriving economy. (Pearson 2013, 34)

After 350 years of Atlantic leadership of the global economy, [the 21<sup>st</sup> century] will see the Pacific rise... This philosophy of everyone as an entrepreneur and innovator is not what underpins education anywhere in the world right now. If the Pacific region is to provide global leadership, or a large share of it, then education systems there face a major challenge of transformation. (IPPR 2012, 73)

The Fourth Way is distinguished by the strength and wisdom of leaders who are bold enough to make a paradigm shift in educational change to advance towards a more inspirational, innovative and sustainable future for all... [It] approaches education in a holistic manner; weaving together the national vision, professional participation, public collaboration within one nation to form a social fabric that bonds its people. (Hargreaves 2012, 8)

While the future looks bright in these examples, few have the imagination to delve into outright prophecy. When the Intergalactic Audit Commission (IAC) shared Earth’s quarter-millennium report card with Sir Michael Barber (2009), it commended our progress but then revealed a nightmare vision for the future if we continue on our current trajectory. The IAC noted that the rift between human

---

<sup>40</sup> OECD website, *Who we are*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/careers/howweare.htm> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

beings and the planet had gone awry, highlighting statements about the ‘*conquest of Everest*’ as a symptom of the problem. The IAC warned Barber to heed the rhythm of growth and decay, stating: ‘Across all of history, civilisations have come and gone, destroyed by overpopulation, conflict, environmental degradation and hubris... How can you possibly have forgotten this?’ (12). Crucially, the universal formula [Well Educated =  $E(K+T+L)$ ] that it shares may enable us to ward off this decay, if faithfully implemented. Sir Michael Barber quotes the IAC:

Your schools, right across the world, need to prepare every young person to rise to challenges described here and exploit the emerging opportunities – to thrive in vast, diverse cities, share the planet with other living things, preserve the wildernesses, generate economic growth without waste, resolve conflicts peacefully and deploy wisdom and judgement at moments of crisis. It is not ‘all relative’; these are matters of right and wrong on which the quality of life, and perhaps life on earth itself, ultimately depend. (16)

He then reflects on their vision:

You may say: “This sounds impossible.” I will agree and add, “and necessary”. The IAC will agree too and calmly point out that in 1750 travelling from Liverpool to Manchester on a train, never mind landing on the Moon, seemed impossible too. (16)

Like Moses descending from Mount Sinai, Barber lays out the prophetic vision bestowed to him by a higher power, including: a utopian future which requires no less than the transfiguration of humankind; a universal formula for self-salvation; and the willful suspension of logical doubt to sustain a vision that is both impossible and yet necessary to actualize. The faith is reinforced through appeal to achievements in engineering, equating the natural with the social. Moreover, the symbolic victory of man over nature is used to both warn and to inspire us, drawing on the conquest of Everest and Space respectively.

Although the IAC cite ‘ethical underpinning’ as the most vital aspect of their formula, Barber asserts that ‘the first steps [to realizing this vision] are surely to examine both what the best education systems in the world currently do and how they do it and learn the lessons’ (16). And yet, the indicators used to identify the ‘best performing’ systems in the world take no account of ethical underpinning, and instead focus on tracking nations’ outcomes relative to one another in ‘the race to the top’. Alexander (2012) highlights the contradiction:

... in a world facing the crises of climate change, resource depletion, over-population, environmental degradation and geo-political instability, is this really how ‘world class’ should be defined? Should we not consider the merits of ‘world class’ as sustaining the world rather than beating it? As fostering international interdependence rather than national supremacy? Whatever happened to

education's moral purposes? (18-19)

This evokes the contradiction at the centre of the OECD's grand vision. At a general level, it depicts a collaborative and interdependent world working together for a better world economy. However, in reports targeted at individual nations, it emphasises the hypercompetitive and unforgiving nature of this global economy, in which reform is a matter of system survival and nations are locked in a perennial battle for national supremacy. I will return to explore this in more detail at the conclusion to the thesis.

### **Summary and implications: two plus two make five**

*Why do they want to dogmatize their prism reality as the universal truth?*

This chapter addressed the guiding question: *how do advocates overcome the issues associated with the identification and transfer of education 'best practices'?* Having argued for the central role of narratives in persuasion, the analysis focused on how the overall story was developed and deployed, rather than just the strategies used to overcome the core issues directly. I here begin by revisiting the construction of the calculable world, before moving on to enumerate the narrative strategies deployed within this framework. Finally, I reflect on the implications of these strategies.

To begin, changes in the global situation are highlighted to argue for a realignment of priorities and values across all systems. Economic gain is cast as the ultimate good and education outcomes for the nation and the individual are defined entirely in economic terms. By positioning the outcomes measured by PISA as a reliable proxy for the ultimate good, the OECD promotes the data as the universal measure of education "quality". School systems' aims and outcomes are rendered directly commensurable. This is the first move towards the construction of a second reality, one that is ostensibly amenable to management and control, and in which the task of self-salvation is possible. The strategies used to overcome the issues unfold within this broad construction, nuancing the basic narrative laid out in the schema of plot.

The *logic of action* establishes the significance and viability of the task, undermining heretical perspectives and instruments. By emphasizing their reputation and/or experience, or by demonstrating the scientific nature of comparisons and/or genre knowledge, advocates provide an authoritative basis

for promoting claims. A range of techniques then streamline complexity, developing straightforward explanations that focus on factors amenable to control. Caveats included to demonstrate sensitivity to the issues are marginalized, and a variety of moves enable the delivery of the research ambition without making overt causal claims. Finally, speculative claims are recast as firm but flexible prescriptions, with contingencies placing the onus for successful interpretation and implementation elsewhere.

Whereas *Worlds Apart* (1996) notes the legitimacy of issues and then relies on the logic of action to promote experimentation with foreign practices, this tentative language has been replaced with carefully qualified certainty. The genre has evolved to incorporate criticisms, co-opting them into the methodology. Cumulatively, these strategies combine to patch over inconsistencies, buttressing the storyline to develop a system that is internally coherent and therefore resistant to critique. The most complete expression of this process of co-option comes in the OECD's vision for the future of education reform, as presented in its *Lessons from PISA for Japan* (2012):

Decision makers in the education arena can benefit from benchmarking research in the same way as heads of firms. This involves learning about the range of factors that lead to success, taking inspiration from the lessons of others, and then adapting the operational elements to the local context while adding unique elements that make their own education system one of a kind. (23)

The strategies used to streamline complexity, to make causal inferences, and to qualify claims are neatly contained within this vision. To realise this ideal, the next logical step is simply to begin aligning curricula and teaching with PISA, a move that closely parallels the storyline preferred by advocates promoting privatization (Spreen and Stark 2014).

Systematically relating national curricula and assessment to PISA is already presented as one of the survey's possible applications. The OECD (2012) asserts that 'Brazil is providing secondary school with information on the progress it must make to match the average PISA performance level by 2021', and 'Germany, Japan and the US state of Oregon have embedded PISA items in their national/state assessments' (23). With these appeals to precedent, an assessment which was originally marketed as curriculum independent becomes the global standard, and what was once denounced as 'gaming' is recast as 'benchmarking'. From this, the goal of comparative research is simply to 'learn enough from [our] competitors to beat them at their own game' (24).

The outcomes have been established, and the system is closed conceptually. The process unfolds across a number of levels and stages, and advocates may simply follow conventions set by their research training and/or organizational culture, responding to the perceived exigencies of the frame. Many strategies, such as selective interpretation and incomplete stories, may be pursued unconsciously, and advocates exhibit varying degrees of zeal. Rather than dismissing actors as cynical, motivated by profit and/or influence, many educationists may indeed be “true believers”, internalising and objectifying the story logic and the fabric of the system. The industry has an endless capacity for reinvention, and the strategies used to qualify recommendations ensure that advocates do not need to confront failure directly.

If the key aim is to initiate and consolidate the process of conversion, the first step is simply to ensure that systems subscribe to the storyline and are ‘on the road’ to salvation. The story of control must then be credible enough to sustain the teleological component of the storyline and to keep the masses faithful. In this way, the most significant development may lie not in the attempt to circumvent reality, but the belief that, through the various acts of sorcery, the feat has been achieved. In such extreme cases, Voegelin (1952) argues:

With radical immanentization the dream world has blended into the real world terminologically; the obsession of replacing the world of reality by the transfigured dream world has become the obsession of the one world in which the dreamers adopt the vocabulary of reality, while changing its meaning, as if the dream were reality. (169)

Things are not as complex as they once seemed and, as Cowen (2014) observes, ‘the genie (i.e. context) is firmly back in the bottle’ (294). To critique is merely to have failed to understand. The second reality has matured into the reality par excellence. Two plus two make five. The idealised future lies just beyond the horizon, and the route to salvation has been mapped out. All that remains is to take the leap of faith, and to embark on the journey to perfection. I now turn to explore this in the context of the review of the National Curriculum in England, which closely parallels the OECD’s vision for reform.

## Chapter VIII.

### Constructing a framework for learning

“I think the notion of a ‘new paradigm’, I’d want to be a bit critical about that because... I’m not sure whether it’s true... But this *could* be a new paradigm, even though, you know, I didn’t talk to David Reynolds, and I didn’t talk to Michael Barber... and Michael Barber didn’t talk to David Reynolds. It could still be the case that it emerges as a paradigm, because of the way that the information is appropriated by an elite, i.e. by powerful politicians, or by the press, and is disseminated as such that it becomes a part of the public consciousness. Just as, you know, now, most people in society think that the sun’s at the centre of the solar system.” (Tim Oates, interview conducted 2013).

#### Introduction

This chapter addresses RQ3:

*How has the NP influenced the review of the National Curriculum in England?*

The question is approached on two main levels, exploring (1) how the story logic identified in chapter III infused the remit for the review, and (2) how it was translated into the framework for the review, which for the first time was premised on benchmarking high-performing systems.

The chapter is not primarily concerned with patterns of borrowing, or referencing, or questions of what is borrowed, and/or how it is borrowed, but with tracing the institutionalization of the NP, and identifying how international comparisons were used to support the story of control. The analysis does not focus on the substantive claims made about specific systems, but on the strategies used to overcome the issues associated with the research ambition. This is informed by the analysis in Chapter VII. Specifically, I explore how the framework is constructed to streamline complexity and to enable causal inferences that support the reform agenda. Finally, I situate the process of benchmarking within the overall pattern of reforms, and the approach to governance.

The analysis focuses on the political realm in England, where I argue the story logic has largely slipped the to unconscious level as part of the approach to governance, and in which the calculable world is accepted as the reality *par excellence*. Actors that operate as experts in legitimation within the system may be cognizant of the issues, and of alternate frames, but are guided by the demands of the this system, and committed to generating evidence that supports the story of control. Rather than dismissing actors as cynical, motivated by self-

interest or other ulterior motives, I suggest that the familiar pattern of moves and strategies that emerges reflects a sincere attempt to navigate the paradox of control, and to guide the nation towards the idealised future.

### ***Method and process***

The analysis follows the NPF's guidelines for multi-level analysis, using the review of the National Curriculum, as a case for develop understanding of the NP. As Gillham (2000b) asserts, the focus on a specific case is useful 'to get under the skin of a group or organization to find out what really happens' (11), and enables the use of multiple methods and multiple perspectives (Yin 1989) to develop a 'thick description' of the process that focuses over a broad period of time (Merriam 1998). The chapter draws on existing commentaries, official documents, and interviews with elites involved in the review process, triangulating these sources to develop insight into how the NP influenced the logic of the review. This enables a more in-depth analysis of the NP, and presents an opportunity for reflection on the moves and strategies identified in Chapter VII.

Gillham (2000b) states that 'if you are doing individual case studies then interviewing is practicable and probably essential' (61), and as Dexter (2006) points out, 'elite interviewees' are particularly important because 'often they are the only person to know specific information on a particular issue or topic' (5). This is particularly true in the case of the framework for the review, which was constructed by Tim Oates. As part of the research process, I was able to formally interview Tim Oates and also met with him on several other occasions, listening to speeches and developing insight into his perspective and approach to comparisons. All quotations are taken from the formal interview, and other sources that are publicly available. Focusing over time in this way also revealed how the framework was amended in response to critique.

More generally, elite interviewing is associated with people with power in the policy process (Walford 1994). To develop a broader perspective, I began by interviewing a Department for Education (DfE) official who worked on the review, and the other members of the expert panel: Andrew Pollard, Mary James, and Dylan Wiliam. I was able to draw on further interviews with a range of senior officials, including, Sir David Bell (senior civil servant), Barry Sheerman (senior civil servant, and chair of the Education and Skills Select Committee 2001-2007, and the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee 2007-2010), Nick Gibb

(Minister of State for Schools), another senior DfE official, and an analyst for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)<sup>41</sup>. These interviews, provided insight into the background of the review, but do not feature prominently in the analysis.

I used semi-structured interviews, which enabled an 'elaborate, in-depth response' (Gillham 2000a, 19), using the analysis in the preceding stages of the thesis to guide the discussion. In addition to the standard research information sheet and consent forms, I sent the preliminary phase of analysis (Auld and Morris 2014) to interviewees as a stimulus for discussion, and also to ensure that they were aware of my views on the issues. Following McCulloch (2004), analysis of the data assumed an inductive and reflexive form, and the initial phase of document analysis directed the focus of the interviews, which in turn informed further analysis of the documents.

The first main level of analysis lays out the context for the review at the macro-level, focusing on the institutionalization of the NP and the policy topography. This section has three main sections: *The institutionalization of the NP*; *The remit for the review of the National Curriculum*; and *The genesis of Could Do Better*. These sections draw on (1) existing commentaries (e.g. Ball and Exley 2011), (2) official documents, including *The Schools White Paper* (DfE 2010), the remit for the review (DfE 2011), and other official publications/announcements (e.g. Gove 2013), and (3) interviews with key individuals.

The second level of analysis focuses on the construction of the framework for the review, and draws on the schema of plot, and the moves and strategies identified in Chapter VII. I began with a detailed analysis of the report *Could Do Better* (2010), which laid out the framework and principles for the review. I also drew on Oates' speeches (e.g. 2013a), seminars (e.g. 2013b) and reports (e.g. 2014) to nuance this initial phase of analysis, and reviewed the key literature that had been used to inform the development of the framework. The interview with Tim Oates enabled further triangulation, and I was also able to draw on the interviews with other members of the expert panel, NFER analyst, and senior civil

---

<sup>41</sup> The interviews with Nick Gibb, David Bell, Barry Sheerman, Mary James, the second DfE official, and the NFER analyst, were conducted as part of a larger project, funded by the ESRC and RGC (Hong Kong). Though I did not conduct all of these interviews personally, project members were able to ask questions relevant to the aims of this Chapter, and in all cases the interviewees signed the relevant consent forms to make the interview data available for this project. Though the DfE officials and the NFER analyst did not request confidentiality, I have nonetheless withheld their details as the information is not essential to the analysis in this chapter.

servants, including the DfE officials who worked closely with Tim Oates and government ministers on the review.

Though the interviews with other members of the expert panel are not quoted directly, they provided important insight into the review process.

### **1. The review of the National Curriculum**

Hajer (1993) asserts that a discourse coalition can be taken to ‘dominate’ a political realm only if: ‘(1) it dominates the discursive space; that is, central actors are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse... (i.e. structuration)... and (2) this is reflected in the institutional practices of that political domain; that is the, the actual policy process is conducted according to the ideas of a given discourse’ (47). I argue that the process of structuration had already begun by the early 1980s, but that under the Conservative-led coalition government the NP was institutionalized.

While a full historical analysis of the long process of institutionalization is not possible, a brief overview is presented to provide some context for the remit for the review. The analysis unfolds in three sections, which were identified above: *The institutionalization of the NP*; *The remit for the review of the National Curriculum*; and, *The genesis of Could Do Better*. This brief overview frames the analysis of the construction of a framework for learning, which was used to support the review of the National Curriculum.

#### ***The institutionalization of the NP***

MacLure (2006) claims that international comparisons came to the fore strongly in England in the early 1980s, and McLean (1992) observes that education was already being viewed as ‘a function of global economic competition’ throughout the 1980s, with the assumption that ‘internationally inferior performance [could] be blamed on comparatively poor British performance [in international surveys]’ (1). Teams from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI) had been taking regular trips overseas to inspect foreign systems of education since the mid-80s, a practice that continued up until 1996, by which time HMI had been replaced by Ofsted. While the story of decline was already established, the actual policy process was not conducted according to the logic of the NP.

Rather than ‘high performance’, the HMI’s primary motivation for selection of cases was “the prevalence of some educational practice(s) which had relevance to immediate policy issues in Britain” (McLean 1992, 17). Based on an extensive

review of literature, policy documents and interviews with policy officials, Smith and Exely (2006) suggest that evidence from overseas systems between 1985 and 1995 was used selectively to confirm existing agendas in England, if at all. The view is supported by Whitty and Edwards (1998), who attributed the ‘parallel policy initiatives’ being pursued in the US and UK to ideological affinity rather than cases of substantive borrowing.

The attempt to steer research towards an engineering model was well underway by the late 1990s (Hammersley 2012), with David Blunkett<sup>42</sup> (2000) complaining that researchers tended to ‘address issues other than those which are central and directly relevant to the political and policy debate’ (15). Sammons (2008) points out that the appointment of Michael Barber as head of Tony Blair’s Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU), and other academics from the school improvement (SI) and school effectiveness research (SER) movements, ‘reflect[ed] the importance attached to policy relevant research’ (254). References to international sources tended to remain erratic, and Barber (2014) confirms that much of the actual benchmarking was still taking place at the national level. Sir David Bell reflected on the period:

... in the four years I was at Ofsted, I don’t recall much being made of that international comparative material in policy discussion and debate. Some ministers showed more interest in it than others. One that might not surprise you, David Miliband was always very interested in what was going on overseas. I don’t recall... Charles Clarke being as interested as David. That’s not to say he wasn’t interested, but he never struck me as being a great source of discussion and debate... Michael [Gove] was just very interested in what was happening in international education systems.

As a DfE pointed out, ‘the [perceived] fall down the league tables was a useful burning platform for Michael Gove to say that we needed to improve our education’ (interview conducted 2014). England had joined PISA for its inaugural round in 2000, showing relatively strong performance. In PISA 2003 and PISA 2006 England’s ranking subsequently declined, though the 2000 data was later shown to have used unrepresentative sampling (Jerrim 2011). Nonetheless, this perceived decline was used by the Opposition to criticise New Labour’s education policies, strategies and achievements (Sellar and Lingard, 2013), a strategy which continued once the Coalition had assumed power. The move was anticipated by Sir David Bell, who, after meeting with Gove (Shadow Minister for

---

<sup>42</sup> Former Secretary of state for Education and Employment, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1997 - 8<sup>th</sup> June 2001

Education at the time), reflected:

For obvious political reasons, the Opposition, and this was Michael Gove, was making a lot of what *he* said even more successful systems across the world are doing. And even when I was meeting Michael in the pre-election phase, pre-election discussions, it was pretty obvious from the beginning that Michael was very interested in these issues in international comparison... And I think that's where, as it were, the political and the comparative educational felt for a bit that they were inextricably linked... Labour... wanted to use international comparisons on tests and league tables... to shore up its reform program. A political opposition clearly wanted to find a line for attack, saying "yes, but it's not quite as good as it could have been". (Interview conducted 2014)

Forestier and Crossley (2015) point out that 'Michael Gove has repeatedly turned to PISA studies and the McKinsey reports on high-performing systems to inform and justify his reform agenda' (4). Gove (2011a) revealed directly that 'one of the most profound influences on me in doing this job has been Sir Michael Barber. And Sir Michael Barber's work for McKinsey has reinforced in my mind what so many studies have also underlined'. Nick Gibb regularly refers to McKinsey, Barber and OECD in his speeches (e.g. 2011a; 2011b; 2012a; 2012b), and Adonis (2012) references the McKinsey studies extensively, quoting them directly (and uncritically) in support of his educational agenda.

Though the expansion of think tanks in the UK is generally traced to the 1970s and 1980s (Nutley and Webb 2000), this community increasingly enjoys direct access to Whitehall as traditional institutions which acted as buffers were stripped out to 'ease bureaucracy'. Lingard (2015) makes a similar case in Australia, where the restructured state has lost much of its research capacity and there is a culture of 'fast policy making'. As Barber (2014) states, 'governments are increasingly saying, not just [in England], that they can't do their data analysis themselves. They kind of just put the data out there and let other people do it for them' (80). Nick Gibb indicated that the coalition had 'relied very heavily' on the McKinsey studies, and emphasised that 'Michael Barber's analysis has been very influential about autonomy' (interview conducted 2013).

When asked about the involvement and influence of universities and faculties of education on the review of the National Curriculum, Nick Gibb indicated they were 'less [involved], because my own view is that they're part of the problem not the solution' (interview conducted 2013). Insight into the extent of this perception was provided by Sir David Bell as he reflected on the period of political transition:

In a sense, Michael Barber continued his role as the seamless confidant of Secretaries of State, irrespective of party or persuasion, and he was very influential, very, very influential, because after 2005 he'd gone to McKinsey, and

was doing all of his global education work. So the combined influence of Barber and Andreas Schleicher... who Gove once described as the most important man in British education... that really did feel like a big, big theme there... There was no doubt, if you recall what I said about Michael Barber, a frequent visitor to Michael Gove in the department, all the work McKinsey was doing, you had Schleicher's influence as well... you really felt there was quite a lot going on formally and informally that was trying to draw on the international comparisons... There was a default position increasingly, "let's think about what's happening outside the UK."

The move was revealed when the coalition government published *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper* (DfE 2010), and the basic storyline is summarized in Table 7 (below). While the *Schools White Paper* (SWP) draws heavily on international evidence developed by the NP, Morris (2012) exposes the inconsistent use of evidence, and the manner in which aspects of different coalition reports (specifically McKinsey and OECD) are selected, often distorted, and then portrayed as being drawn from a coherent body of authoritative evidence. The emphasis on revising the National Curriculum is justified with reference to exploratory studies (e.g. McKinsey 2007), which state the importance of the curriculum in high-performing systems.

While the SWP was selective, one of the DfE officials pointed out that it was largely assembled before the Coalition came into office. Though the conservatives and liberal democrats each had a set of policy proposals that they wanted implemented, and though the Conservatives in particular had been using international evidence, she claimed that it wasn't clear how they used it, or how rigorously the process had been. As the official pointed out, 'there was a hiatus on research when the Coalition Government first took power', during which time the SWP was published. By the time the review of the National Curriculum was underway, however, the department had resumed its usual research activities.

I now turn to clarify the distinctive nature of the remit for the review of the National Curriculum, and situate it with regard to the policy topography in England, and the broader proposals laid out in the SWP.

**Table 7. Summary of story in foreword to *The Schools White Paper***

Stages		Schools White Paper (DfE 2010)
Act 1	(i) Imagined ordinary	“So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we’re doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country’s future”.
	(ii) “The call”	“The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. In the most recent OECD PISA survey in 2006 we fell from 4th in the world in the 2000 survey to 14th in science, 7th to 17 <sup>th</sup> in literacy, and 8th to 24th in mathematics”
Act 2	(iii) Blame	Fall in rankings implicitly attributed to New Labour policies & failure to draw adequately on ‘international evidence’. 1. Teacher quality 2. Bureaucracy 3. Low aspirations
	(iv) Moral	“The only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools <i>our children deserve</i> , is by learning the lessons of other countries’ success” “The most successful countries already combine a high status teaching profession; high levels of autonomy for schools; a comprehensive and effective accountability system and a strong sense of aspiration for all children, whatever their background” 1. Teach First (raising entry requirements) 2. School autonomy (i.e. academies) & accountability (including National Curriculum reform) 3. Welfare reforms & Pupil Premium
Act 3	(v) Idealised future	(1) World-class system (2) High-performing students, of all backgrounds “We have no choice but to be this radical if our ambition is to be world-class... Tweaking things at the margins is not an option. Reforms on this scale are absolutely essential if our children are to get the education they deserve.” Improvement in education outcomes relative to competitors will improve both the nation’s economic performance, and individual’s life chances.

### ***The remit for the review of the National Curriculum***

Whereas the SWP relied on a number of exploratory reports to identify broad trends in high-performing systems, the review of the National Curriculum is a targeted analysis, benchmarking high-performing systems directly. This was premised on the construction of a framework for learning, which could overcome the issues associated with transfer, or at least withstand critique in the highly contested policy arena. As Sir David Bell stated:

Where this had, I think, the most direct impact, a very profound impact, the international comparisons, was on the review of the National Curriculum... Michael [Gove] set out, as it were, the original terms of the review, to learn from and to find out what the most successful education systems were doing.

A press release was placed on the DfE website (2011a) to announce the remit for the review of the National Curriculum, with the title: *Education Secretary Michael Gove announces a new world-class curriculum to help reverse the fall in international league tables*. The announcement quotes Gove:

We have sunk in international league tables and the national curriculum is substandard. Meanwhile the pace of economic and technological change is accelerating and our children are being left behind. The previous curriculum failed to prepare us for the future. We must change course. Our review will examine the best school systems in the world and give us a world-class curriculum that will help teachers, parents and children know what children should learn at what age.

The following aims are stated:

- Replace the current substandard curriculum with one based on the best school systems in the world, providing a world-class resource for teachers and children.
- Consider what subjects should be compulsory at what age.
- Consider what children should be taught in the main subjects at what age.

The rationale appears to represent the realization of the OECD's vision for reform, premised on benchmarking competitor nations. The focus of the review must be understood in the context of the broader policy package promoted within the SWP, promoting autonomy with accountability, and the long-standing emphasis on developing a market-based education system that is "self-improving". A DfE official referred to the 'triangle' of considerations guiding the review team:

There's the international, there's the policy coherence, and there's the engagement with the profession and the extent to which you need to debate and argue things through with them... Autonomy and accountability cannot be underestimated as policy drivers for this Government that defined how we thought about the curriculum... Curriculum reviews are a lightning rod for many,

many issues, and they become a focal point for debate about “why do we have an education system at all?” We knew it would involve quite heated debates about... crucial issues, fundamental to any reform of the education system. At the same time, we had to be absolutely clear about what we were reviewing, and not get into any of those other things.

This emphasis on overall policy coherence is significant, as the SWP argues that recent revisions to the curriculum have interfered with the ability to develop reliable accountability measures, with a knock-on effect on entitlement and overall standards. The statement also presents a clear example of how the process of framing is used to determine what issues are considered as problems that require attention. Within the context of these broader aims, a number of specific priorities for the review are listed (DfE 2010):

It is our ambition to reduce unnecessary prescription, bureaucracy and central control throughout our education system. That means taking a new approach towards the curriculum... The National Curriculum should set out only the essential knowledge and understanding that all children should acquire and leave teachers to decide how to teach this most effectively. (40)

Improving the recruitment, selection and training of school teachers and leaders, giving them increased authority and giving schools greater autonomy will give the school system greater capacity to improve. *Alongside that, setting high standards through the curriculum and qualifications and holding schools accountable for the results they achieve will create a powerful driver of improvement.* (73)

While Gove repeatedly emphasised a concern for equity and entitlement, Kelly (2009) points out that this often covers the reality, ‘the desire for a basis for comparison, evaluation and rankings’ (229). The Conservative government had gradually been changing the way in which social policy was made throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and New Labour ‘retained a fondness... of performance measures, league tables and mechanisms of audit and inspection’ (Bochel 2011, 254). Ball (2013) notes that ‘education (in England) is now almost entirely subsumed within an overall strategy of public service reform, and many initiatives in the organization and delivery of education have more or less direct parallels in other parts of the public sector’ (119).

Though the agenda had been tightly defined, the remit announced that the government would work with an advisory committee and an expert panel, the latter of which would be charged with providing an evidence base for the review (DfE 2011b). Tim Oates, director of research at Cambridge Assessment, was appointed chair of the expert panel, with Mary James, Andrew Pollard and Dylan William making up the rest of the team. They were expected to ‘collate evidence on the best international examples’ (Gove 2011b). This process would be aided

by a review team within the DfE, while Tim Oates was tasked with constructing the framework. The remit clearly stated that the new curriculum would be based on the best school systems in the world, bringing CE to the centre of the story of control. A DfE official clarified how the storyline of the NP had infused the remit for the review, and how this in turn influenced the approach to comparisons:

On the understanding that we are now economically and socially, thinking about England as a porous economy... the rising of the developing countries... means that we need to think differently about our education system, vis-a-vis theirs, because a lot of their development is about how good their education system is... There's a paradigm... a policy shift, in how we think about how well we've been doing. I don't think that academics think that we need an education system that generates people who are much more intelligent than we used to. But from a policy perspective, we need to do that. Otherwise we're going to be blindsided, in terms of the knowledge economy...

I do wonder if the education system in this country, and indeed other countries, is going through a development process that will get us to a state that we're currently in with regard to, say, economic comparisons, and indeed other forms of demographic and/or health comparisons. Because those systems have gone through those changes over the years...

I think ultimately it comes down to your theoretical and intellectual framework... You need to take an internationalist and/or a globalisationist approach to looking at what other countries are doing. You have to work on the assumption that there are things to learn from them that you can implement in this country. You just need to do so with clear intellectual effort and on the best evidence available about whether it will work or not. And therefore, any research that just says, *vive le difference*, all of the time, is useless to that endeavour. So anyone that says, countries A-Z are too different to England, therefore we can't do it... in some sense shouldn't be invited to the party, as they can't work within the right kind of paradigm to learn from other countries. (Interview conducted 2014)

The developments outlined by the DfE official encourage the move from national to international reference frames. The first of these statements outlines the conditions of the imagined ordinary and sets the scene for the story of transnational decline-improvement. The second of these statements demonstrates belief in the subsequent standardization of education aims and outcomes, provoking the final reflection, which promotes a 'globalisationist approach' to international comparisons, and which enables the generation of *useful* knowledge. This process of reasoning appears sincere, based on true-belief in the storyline, or at least a resigned pragmatism, rather than as a cynical process.

The actual focus the proposed reforms is still directed by the approach to governance, and the remit for the review was guided by the desire for overall policy coherence. International comparisons thus became central to the process as a tool for conceptual maintenance. With a taboo placed on approaches to

international comparisons that undermined the remit for the review, and with this 'right kind of paradigm' in mind, it is now relevant to turn to the genesis of CDB and the construction of the framework for the review.

***The genesis of Could Do Better: 'the right kind of paradigm'***

While the remit had established that the review of the National Curriculum would be premised on the best international examples, CDB publicly laid out the principles and framework for the review. In the foreword to the report, Michael Gove describes it as a 'fascinating and insightful paper', rather underplaying his role in guiding its focus and content. Judd and Crequer (1993) note that persons sympathetic to government policy are often placed in key positions, thereby ensuring that official channels conform to party expectations. After the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) was replaced by Ofqual in 2010, scepticism about the process of reform emerged:

The government will appoint a committee of experts to offer advice... So, we have the prospect of the planned new national curriculum being shaped by advice from the education secretary's hand-picked committee of experts and then implemented by his own department... the department's civil servants simply won't know how to challenge the advice that comes from Gove's curriculum appointees. (Baker 2010)

In 2013, Gove published an article in the Daily Mail<sup>43</sup>, characterising the one hundred academics who had put their name to a letter criticizing the coalition's reforms as both 'The Enemies of Promise', and 'The Blob'. Gove reveals a series of strategies for undermining heretics, explicitly stating that the coalition government has 'taken [The Enemies of Promise] on' by: (1) abolishing the quangos and committees that they 'covertly' used to influence policy and constrain reform, (2) taking teacher training out of universities and into schools to let young teachers focus on their vocation, and (3) giving secondary schools academy status to bypass 'The Blob's allies in local government'. The focus of these strategies closely resemble the script used by the privatization movement in the U.S to subdue heretical coalitions (Spren and Stark 2014).

Professor Mary James reflected on the formation of the expert panel, attributing Tim Oates' initial involvement to an article he had published in the

---

<sup>43</sup> Gove, M. (2013), I refuse to surrender to Marxist teachers hell-bent on destroying our schools, in the *Mail Online*, 23.03.2013. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2298146/I-refuse-surrender-Marxist-teachers-hell-bent-destroying-schools-Education-Secretary-berates-new-enemies-promise-opposing-plans.html> (Last Accessed 10.02.2016)

Guardian with Warwick Mansell and Jessica Shepherd<sup>44</sup>:

Tim did say there was a problem about... “What is the substance of the curriculum, rather than the processes through which you should be taught?” And I think that was picked up by Nick Gibb, who then said, “This is the man we need to head up the expert panel” ... of course he was asked to do a paper, which he did for them... It was the one... where he was doing comparisons (*Could Do Better*)... Well, really it wasn't Tim's paper. (Interview conducted 2013)

Nick Gibb would later describe Tim Oates as ‘*the expert*’, (2010) stating that ‘there's no one, I don't think, in English education who knows more about this subject than he does. Not so much expertise lies within the DfE because they are civil servants generally, not academics’ (interview conducted 2013). The statement appears to confirm Baker's (2010) suspicions that the department's civil servants would not be well positioned to challenge Gove's appointees. Oates elaborated on the context of his involvement in the review:

I was with QCA at that point, I'd been there since its inception in 1997, and I was very nervous. I didn't like what was happening to the National Curriculum. We discussed it heavily here and so I produced a couple of articles, one with Warwick Mansell which went into the Guardian [2009] ...

Oates emphasised that he had not intended for the article to precipitate a curriculum review, or to put himself forward should any review ensue:

... So I thought my job was done and dusted then really. You know: done the job, I will continue to do various aspects of comparative analysis in relationship to our [Cambridge Assessment] thinking on curriculum... I was busily looking at criteria that we should use for identification of evidence from transnational comparative work, criteria of adequacy, explanatory power and so on... and beginning to develop a comparative approach which would enhance the international assessment development work which we did here [Cambridge Assessment].

And then suddenly there was a great deal of interest in these lectures and, to be perfectly candid, people started turning up at these lectures and sitting in the back row that I'd never seen before. So I'd look down the list, thinking, “who is that woman?” And it turned out she'd be from Michael Gove's office... So there was obviously interest growing... and they said, ‘look, can you assemble some of these things into an argument?’ So I began to construct what was a prototype draft of *Could Do Better*.

And what I was saying was that the National Curriculum review had to be principled; that there was now the opportunity to develop a case for revision based on *some* comparison... of using transnational comparisons. Not only the big surveys, but also comparison of curriculum structures, also comparison of the

---

<sup>44</sup> Mansell, W., & Shepherd, J. (2009) Secondary curriculum is ‘too vague’, exam assessors warn, in *The Guardian* online, 20.10.2009. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/oct/20/secondary-school-curriculum-photosynthesis> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)

review cycle, which was a thematic report within INCA. So in other words, look fairly eclectically at the international evidence but have a framework for identification for saliency and adequacy.

So then I was asked to give a seminar at the department, to just outline some of the theoretical perspectives that we could use to review a National Curriculum, and part of those were drawn from comparative work. And after that seminar I was invited to become part of the expert panel... Chair of the expert panel. And Michael Gove said, "well, can you put together that lecture, this lecture, and that seminar presentation into a paper?", and I said, "Absolutely". So that was the genesis of *Could Do Better*. So that was why it happened. So already there was a stronger link to the policy machine than would be present in just a normal academic paper.

Situating the report in this way was not meant to imply that the report was not Oates' own work, but rather that the intellectual framework had been tailored to meet the needs and specifications set by the remit of the review of the National Curriculum. It is a targeted study, aimed at a specific lever, and at specific problems identified within that lever. When asked whether he felt his appointment could be attributed to his position being aligned with the coalition government's agenda, Oates was pragmatic:

Yes, that's pretty inevitable. I mean, if I'd stood up there and spoken about a whole series of things that were completely at odds with what they were thinking, it might perhaps have given them pause for thought. But I don't think I would have necessarily been invited down to give a lecture and then be chair of the expert panel... No, of course, I think there was a degree of coincidence, but I think it wasn't necessarily that great. I mean, I think what they wanted was to know that, bearing in mind that there was, there *is* the potential, to use as part of a review of the National Curriculum, transnational comparative evidence, here looked a likely approach to ensure that that evidence is used systematically.

Oates was duly seconded to the department, charged with developing the framework for the review. This would be pursued through the construction of a conceptual system, a process which provides insight into how the pressure exerted by the story pushes down to shape the field. While Oates' role within this policy-discourse coalition is quite distinct to the processes of norm-setting and advocacy identified in Chapter VII, the clear remit for the review required the framework to confront the paradox of control

## **2. Could Do Better: Constructing a framework for learning**

Could Do Better was put together in an extremely short period of time. It's not the kind of scholarly approach that I usually use. (Tim Oates, interview conducted 2013)

This section moves to the second level of analysis, exploring the development of the framework outlined in *Could Do Better* (CDB), which was used to guide the review of the National Curriculum. While the analysis uses CDB as the primary source, this is supplemented with sources obtained throughout the course of the review, including the power point slides from the Cambridge Colloquium (publicly available), a speech given by Oates at the Mayor's Education Conference (2013), and a formal interview conducted in Cambridge towards the end of 2013. I will focus here on the development of the framework and then explore how the process of curriculum mapping was pursued within this broader framework.

### ***The logic of action***

Here I briefly outline how the significance and viability of the approach are established. This is presented to provide insight into Tim Oates' interpretation of the situation, providing insight into his cognizance of the issues and degree of belief in the storyline. This is guided by the strategies identified in Chapter VII, including the conditions of the imagined ordinary to provide impetus for reform, and precedents that demonstrate the necessity and viability of the approach.

#### ***(a) The imagined ordinary: chronic stasis and entitlement***

Chapter VII identified the central importance of establishing the frame, providing a platform for developing a persuasive story and advocating reform. The main text of CDB does not draw attention to England's performance relative to other systems, and neither does it emphasise the education-economy relation (as measured by PISA, or other comparative surveys). CDB must be understood in the context of its production, in which the frame had already been established by the SWP and the remit for the review, and Gove's foreword had established the critical nature of the situation. At the mayor's education conference (2013) Oates presented a less hyperbolic picture of the present day situation:

What of England – are we in crisis? Is our education system falling apart? No, not in crisis. Rather, a period of chronic stasis – an inability to improve significantly and quickly. The key indicators are flat; and that's going back three decades. The ICAMMS 1976-2010 proportional reasoning – no significant change. The [OECD] [PIAAC] found the later generations not significantly better than previous ones. The [TIMSS], the [PISA] and other measures simply endorse this... So there certainly seems to be a lot of sense in looking at the fast-improving jurisdictions and seeing if there's anything we can learn' (3-4)

While there is no evidence of crisis or decline, clearly this chronic stasis is perceived as a problem, one which provides sufficient concern to assert that there is 'a lot of sense' in looking to the practices of fast-improving systems for inspiration. When asked to reflect on the underlying ideology highlighted in Auld and Morris (2014), and presented in Chapter V of this thesis, Oates stated:

No, it's right to say that. It is right to say that. And you know, in a sense I recognize that, at one level, the selection of particular principles to drive a review of that kind in a particular period in history are in some senses arbitrary actually, because they derive from the imperatives of the society... Now people like Bill Scott would say, and I've got great sympathy for what Bill's about, that actually embedded in equity and entitlement are certain forms of commitments about the form of our society, and that environmental issues should have a more prominent role in that framing.

So I recognize that, if I say equity and entitlement, and those should drive the national curriculum, that is all in the context of advanced western economy. All in the context of a kind of a Giddensian concept of the emergence of international capital and erosion of the structures of the nation state... It's *all* in that context. But I see it as a desirable short-term objective. I mean, I would want a wider debate, as they had in Finland, a much wider debate about overall trajectories of economic development and societal development, but that would have really bogged us down... I wanted to get on with some achievable objectives.

At a professional level, this pragmatic perspective indicated that Oates was comfortable working within the frame laid out by the remit for the review, and acutely aware of its limitations. That is, the development of the framework would be dictated by the demands of the story logic. Despite acknowledging alternate perspectives, the statement also indicates strong belief that the storyline accurately captures the imperatives of society in this particular period. The conditions of the imagined ordinary are interpreted as the reality *par excellence*, and the significance of the research ambition is therefore established. Oates expressed further appreciation for other perspectives:

I take your point about what does 'high performance' mean? What are the values you associate with 'high performance'... and, you know we could construe, for example, an education system which actually pushes society towards far better integration with the natural world, and is actually 'high performing'. So I'm well aware of the value basis of how you construct 'high performing'. (Interview conducted 2013)

Despite this high level of cognizance regarding alternate frames, the focus was tightly defined by the remit for the review, following the story logic, and the perceived exigencies of the frame. These wider debates and issues would have to be put to one side in order to get on with some achievable objectives. When I pressed Oates on the reliability of the international surveys which provided the

basis for the ‘more sophisticated form of review’, he expressed awareness of the limitations of the data, and adopted the middle ground:

Why use transnational comparisons? And why use the big surveys? People often say, “Oh, you know, you use PISA”. We’re not just using PISA... There’s PISA, there’s TIMMS, there’s PIRLS. People don’t realize that PISA is cross-sectional, not longitudinal, they’re not aware of the methodological limitations of the equating processes, the translation processes, the issue of curriculum linkage of the items or not... the peculiar nature of the PISA items in terms of, you know, maths and science having a very high load in terms of reasoning. All those things... But we were developing a position at Cambridge which says, we’re not in the camp which says you can learn everything from unreflective transnational comparisons. We’re not in the camp which says you can learn nothing. So what’s the theory and the general methodological tenets you should use for being in the middle ground, so you can generate policy *learning* in some regard. And I think that’s where we are. (Interview conducted 2013)

Oates (2013) again adopted the middle ground at the Mayor’s Education Conference:

Can we learn *everything* from looking at other national systems? Policy borrowing of approaches used in other systems? Done crudely, seldom a good idea. By contrast, can we learn *nothing* from other systems? Well that’s absurd too...there have been great transactions between education systems... and actually, some highly beneficial export from the UK... We can of course learn *something*. With a keen eye, informed by sound theory on how education systems work – with due regard to history, culture and complex interactions. (2 italics in original)

Here the middle ground is combined with an appeal to precedent, highlighting ‘great transactions’ between systems, and even some beneficial exports from the UK. Genre knowledge is demonstrated through reference to sound theory, history, culture and complexity, and the decision to pursue the communicative purpose is defined as the most reasonable position. This move subtly undermines perspectives that do not endorse the frame, suggesting that they rule out the possibility of learning altogether. I will return to consider this in more detail below (see *Framework and assumptions*), but first focus on how CDB justifies the designated approach to international comparisons.

### **(b) Breaking the tendency for introspection**

The urgent need for reform has been established in the remit for the review, and restated in Gove’s foreword to CDB. CDB opens by legitimising the focus on foreign systems:

This paper argues that although the National Curriculum for England has been subjected to a protracted process of revision, the latest round of revisions *failed adequately to draw from emerging analysis of high-performing systems around*

*the globe. By taking a wrong turn in revision strategy, accumulated problems were not confronted and new problems were introduced. (1 italics added)*

The discourse of derision is here developed by arguing that New Labour took a wrong turn in revision strategy, failing to draw on the emerging body of international evidence. This provides a neat contrast with the approach adopted by the coalition government. This is developed in the subsequent section, 'Reviewing the National Curriculum in England: breaking the tendency towards introspection' (1). The section develops a brief historical overview of this introspective tendency (1-3), and presents the case for an outward-looking approach:

The deep nature of the change effected by the development and implementation of the National Curriculum inevitably caused a highly introspective process of review and reflection. Rather than keeping a critical eye on the detail of international developments in curriculum, eyes looked inwards. (1)

Cutting into the national introspection precipitated by this process, interest in developments outside these shores has been excited by the emergence of new and revised national curricula in other jurisdictions – Sweden (1994), Massachusetts (1997), Singapore (2000) - with New Zealand (1991) providing a particular focus. (2)

This increasing interest is then given added credibility by asserting the authority of the data to reinforce the frame (*aims and outcomes are directly commensurable*):

... a far more sophisticated form of review has emerged with the maturation of the large international surveys – TIMSS, PISA and PIRLS. (2)

CDB then offers a series of precedents to demonstrate both the interest in learning from high-performing systems elsewhere, and other high profile reports which have successfully engaged with the ambition.

Indeed, interest has been rising in the processes by which nations review their curricula and the rationale behind change... Analysts such as Schmidt and Prawat... Stigler and Stevenson... Rudduck... Askew and Hodgen... have now developed deeper understanding of the features of nations' curriculum arrangements which are associated with high performance... they have identified key characteristics of those systems which have attained high performance and, critically, have improved performance over time. (2)

This leads to the conclusion that:

The body of knowledge from *sound transnational analysis* is of vital importance. This paper argues that the most recent reviews of the National Curriculum in England have failed to harness the insights emerging from *high quality transnational comparisons*. The introspection associated with the review

processes is entirely consistent with tendencies in the educational reform process in England... we should appraise carefully both international and national research in order to drive an evidence-based review of the National Curriculum. (2-3)

The last round of QCDA-led changes depart from the legislative underpinnings of the National Curriculum, remain informed by a nationally-introspective approach and appear under-informed by lessons from transnational comparisons – as such they do not accord with ‘principled re-design’. (5)

Though the frame had been established in the remit for the review, Oates used key elements of the NP’s story logic to demonstrate the need for reform. The significance and viability of the approach was introduced by highlighting the introspective nature of the previous rounds of reform, and asserting that failure to utilise international evidence had contributed to the failure to improve outcomes relative to competitor nations. Appeals to precedent were then used to further legitimise the approach adopted by the review. The appeal to the middle ground subtly undermined the possibility of learning taking place outside the established frame.

The remaining challenge is to present a credible framework for learning from other systems, and to thereby support the story of control. Before turning to the development of the framework, however, I turn briefly to consider the strategies Oates used to establish his credentials as chair of the expert panel, and therefore the authority of his framework and interpretations.

### ***The battle of expertise***

Perceptions of actor credibility are particularly important in a highly contested political arena. As the framework and focus of the review came under increasing pressure, Tim Oates was forced to establish the authority of his claims relative to critics. At the Cambridge Colloquium Oates lamented the practice of ‘cherry picking for the purposes of demolition of domestic policy’. Just as the ‘myopic’ advocate can interpret most any system in a way that supports their agenda, so too the disgruntled critic can find a thread to tug in the hope that the argument unravels.

CDB opens by advocating the use of ‘sound transnational analysis’ (2) in support of an ‘evidence-driven process’ (16), using extensive referencing to support its claims. In this respect it departs from other reports in the genre, and the author sides with the academic community the NP is supposed to have supplanted. In CDB, Oates is careful to distance the framework from ‘crude borrowing’:

Highlighting the importance of using evidence from international comparisons is not arguing for naïve descent into policy borrowing – ‘...country X has been successful in PISA so therefore we need to do exactly what they are doing...’ (10)

Given its explicit remit, this statement begs the question of what sort of activity the review was actually engaging in. The distancing was developed in Oates’ speech at the Mayors Education Conference (2013):

I work for Cambridge Assessment, a large non-teaching department of Cambridge University, and there we work with more than 170 countries. This provides a fascinating opportunity for reflection on different systems and what works well in different settings. This encourages David Raffe’s sophisticated policy *learning* not policy *borrowing*. (2)

Aside from highlighting the reputation and reach of Cambridge Assessment, Oates here uses an academic reference to distance the framework from borrowing, and to distinguish the framework from other reports in the genre (i.e. *McKinsey 2007 & 2010a*). Notably, Robin Alexander (2012) had also referenced Raffe to advance his criticism of the framework for the review, stating:

As David Raffe (2011a) argues, ‘policy learning’ is a more valid and effective pursuit than ‘policy borrowing’. (6)

While it seems that everyone can agree that learning is better than borrowing, clearly there is some disconnect in understanding. Robin Alexander was described by one DfE official as ‘highly critical of the framework underpinning the review’ (interview conducted 2014), and though he offered his paper *Could Do Even Better?* as ‘an addendum... rather than a critique’ (2) to Oates’ paper (2010), he subsequently aligned *Could Do Better* with both the *McKinsey 2007* and *2010a* and *Worlds Apart* to make his perspective clear (Raffe had also used the distinction to criticise *McKinsey 2010a*).

This dual adoption highlights how conflict can arise over the precise meaning, application and ownership of key terms, or how such terms can be adopted and adapted to fit varied purposes. More significantly, it provides an example of how a concept, or critique, that appears to negate a perspective, is co-opted and turned into its affirmation. Oates ‘battle of expertise’ with Robin Alexander was one of the review’s enduring themes. As the review continued, however, Alexander was forced to move from challenging the frame to challenging the specific lessons being drawn. At this level, specific explanations are easily undermined.

In his speech at the Mayor's Education Conference (2013), Oates' addressed such criticism:

Let me show the importance of *digging deep* into evidence – and combining 'high theory' about other systems with sound detail of reality on the ground – by giving some facts about other systems that will contradict what you may have heard. (2013, 2 italics added)

*Why Textbooks Count* (Oates 2014) combines this entreaty to dig deeper with an appeal to insider knowledge, questioning the motivation and expertise of critics. Oates traces Finland's education system through a series of historical phases to demonstrate the importance of curriculum control, arguing:

Phase 2 was characterised by very high levels of centralised prescription and control, and was designed to ensure thorough 're-conditioning' of the system around the principles of fully comprehensive education. This phase is not well-recognised outside of Finland; it jars with many contemporary non-Finnish accounts of the system– it may indeed be an 'inconvenient truth' at odds with the 'desired' wider narrative regarding autonomy (Alexander 2012; Benton 2014). (2014, 15)

Alexander and Benton are thus revealed as the subjects of this pointed attack, with their 'non-Finnish' accounts tainted by their desired narrative of autonomy, and failing to dig deep enough to identify the *true* lessons from this context. A less direct attack shortly follows:

A more accurate reading of the initial modern improvement phase [in Finland] highlights textbooks as an important factor, another 'inconvenient truth' for some analysts. (Oates 2014, 15)

A subsequent report, titled *Finnish Fairy Stories* (Oates 2015), uses a historical overview to systematically address and discredit popular accounts that identify elements of the Finnish system's current form as reasons for high performance. The widespread failure to look beyond the system's current arrangements is, quite reasonably, described as an 'elementary error of analysis' (2).

The range of strategies used to establish expertise are similar to those identified in Chapter VII, including, appeals to: reputation and experience (of both the individual and organisation); the scientific/sophisticated basis of comparisons; genre knowledge and sound theory (combined with empirical observations); and, insider knowledge. Finally, the motives and expertise of critics was questioned.

These strategies were used to establish the authority of the framework, and specific interpretations, and were necessary to fend off challenges in the context

of the politics of expertise. I now turn to explore the development of the framework for the review.

### **The story of control**

This section explores the construction of the framework for learning. This begins by introducing the *framework and assumptions*, before focusing on three key elements: *curriculum coherence*, *control factors*, and *critical realism & caveats*. The analysis is informed by the moves and strategies identified in Chapter VII.

#### **(a) Framework and Assumptions: learning how to learn**

Although CDB expresses awareness of the issues, arguing ‘against crude “policy borrowing” from other nations’ (1), it is also committed to using international comparisons to refine the National Curriculum. Oates assures the reader:

There are sophisticated ways of looking at other systems which enable us to usefully ‘hold up a mirror to our own system’ and develop robust policy regarding the functions, form and content of a National Curriculum for England and the measures around it. (2010, 13)

At the Cambridge Colloquium, Oates situated the approach more directly:

#### **Slide 3**

**parallel description** – interesting but so what  
**policy borrowing** – theoretically deficient  
**analytic transnational comparison** – a basis for action

but...transnational analysis does not supply ‘judgement-free policy formation’



The framework is thereby legitimised by adopting the middle ground between ‘interesting-but-so-what parallel description’ and ‘theoretically deficient

borrowing', implying the supreme logic of the approach. The basis of this more sophisticated approach is clarified in the introduction to CDB:

[This paper] draws from transnational analysis some key concepts – including 'curriculum coherence' and 'curriculum control' – to understand the operation of other nations' systems and establish what we can learn from them, and identify what we can promote in our own system. (1)

This paper argues that two key concepts drawn from transnational analysis – 'curriculum control' and 'curriculum coherence' – are vital for understanding how other nations have developed and managed national curricula to good effect, and both can be used for developing more effective arrangements in England. (4)

These two concepts underpin the development and application of the framework for the review of the National Curriculum, and the concept of analytic transnational comparisons. Before exploring how CDB overcomes the identified issues, I first unpack these two concepts, investigating how they were identified and developed to inform the NCR.

### **(b) Curriculum coherence**

CDB is focused on the perceived effect of curriculum coherence on the *quantifiable outcomes* measured by international surveys. The report also focuses exclusively on *high-performing systems*, asserting that reform is necessary for 'ensuring that the performance of the English system approaches that of the leading nations' (17). By focusing exclusively on high-performing systems, the report develops a straightforward narrative of success. Curriculum coherence is introduced in CDB as follows:

The term 'coherence'... is a highly precise technical term: a national curriculum should have content arranged in an order which is securely based in evidence associated with age-related progression, and all elements of the system (content, assessment, pedagogy, teacher training, teaching materials, incentives and drivers etc.) should all line up and act in a concerted way to deliver public goods. (4)

Its value is advanced with reference to Schmidt and Prawat's (2006) analysis of high-performing systems:

Of equal importance, transnational analyses can provide evidence-based design principles which were absent from the 2007 revisions to the National Curriculum. Key amongst such work is Schmidt and Prawat's analysis of 'curriculum coherence' (Schmidt W & Prawat R 2006). This is strongly grounded in evidence from TIMSS, and argues that 'curriculum coherence' is vital, and *is associated with* high performing systems. (Oates 2010, 13 italics added)

The emphasis on curriculum coherence is therefore promoted with reference to

*established knowledge*, based on an exploratory study of high-performing systems. This is consistent with other targeted studies. And yet, while Schmidt and Prawat's analysis focuses on the 37 different countries involved in TIMSS, and explores the effectiveness of a limited range of mechanisms of control for achieving coherence, it does not relate this to the systems' overall performance. In fact, Schmidt and Prawat's (2006) study is itself premised on the taken-for-granted nature of this relationship, providing two unattributed statements on the matter:

One of the often-cited results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is that there is a direct relationship between students' exposure to coherent content and their performance on achievement tests. (641)

If the goal is to produce greater curricular coherence at the classroom level, an outcome that has been shown to lead to increases in student achievement in mathematics and science, then the results of this study are clear cut. (656)

Curriculum coherence had already been highlighted as an issue by the Children, Schools and Families Committee (CSFC) in 2009, prior to the release of CDB, and the point here is not to question the importance of curriculum coherence in raising performance on the outcomes of interest. Indeed, the two statements might best be treated as distinct: (1) curriculum coherence is vital; and, (2) curriculum coherence is associated with high-performing systems. Once we understand what is meant by 'curriculum coherence' (clarified above), and understand that the 'vital' goal is to raise student performance on the outcomes of interest, the first statement 'curriculum coherence is vital' can be understood as an analytic claim (null hypothesis: *a curriculum that is not coherent is more likely to raise student outcomes than a coherent curriculum*). The logic is laid out more clearly in the following statement:

Schmidt's concept of 'curriculum coherence' relates to (i) material in curriculum frameworks, textbooks etc. being in an appropriate age-related sequence; and (ii) that all elements in a system should 'line up', so that contradictions are not set up in the different elements, and professionals are not subject to contradictory incentives and targets (Schmidt & Prawat 2006). (Oates 2014, 8)

The second clause, that curriculum coherence is associated with high-performing systems, does not *prove* the validity of the connection. This relates to Egan's (1988) distinction between the analytic and the arbitrary in education research, in which empirical (arbitrary) elements are drawn in to support what Smedsland (1979) refers to as 'analytic common-sense axioms'. As Egan (1988) argues, the analytic component is generalisable, but the empirical is not.

Oates does in fact intend to establish an analytic basis for comparisons, and this task begins with the identification of mechanisms of control:

Schmidt's work suggests that a level of control must be exercised in a system in order to promote a necessary level of curriculum coherence. Once again, it is vital to recognise that the National Curriculum cannot, by itself, guarantee curriculum coherence in the system. A system is regarded as 'coherent' when the national curriculum content, textbooks, teaching content, pedagogy, assessment and drivers and incentives all are aligned and reinforce one another. For this to be the case, a certain level of control is necessary. (15)

CDB pre-empts likely criticism that the proposed coherence will result in rigid, top-down control, asserting:

[Schmidt and Prawat's] more extended analysis of the nature of national control suggests that there is no rigid association between a system possessing curriculum coherence and being subject to tight, 'top down' control, nor it being devolved – the group of countries which exhibit curriculum coherence includes examples of both. (Oates 2010, 14)

Crucially, Schmidt and Prawat's comparative work suggests that this level of control need not necessarily derive from top-down measures. (Oates 2010, 15)

While it may be true that there is no 'rigid association', Schmidt and Prawat (2006) state:

Curriculum coherence, defined in this way, is more apt to be found in systems that are centralized—like those in Japan and France—where a firm sense of what must happen comes from the top, along with the political capability to bring it about. (641)

The promotion and positioning of curriculum coherence therefore provides us with an example of confirmation-disconfirmation bias, demonstrating how associations are inflated or deflated to support the storyline. CDB argues that the desired coherence cannot be achieved without the proposed changes to curriculum content, which is necessary to ensure a certain level of control. Next I explore the range of control factors identified in CDB, and the strategies used to identify and promote them.

### **(c) Control factors**

CDB presents a range of control factors that are to be carefully managed and aligned to ensure curriculum coherence:

[This paper] argues against crude 'policy borrowing' from other nations and for sophisticated management of the 'control factors' at our disposal, in our own setting. (Oates 2010, 1)

The *weight of evidence from transnational comparison* is that *a certain degree* of curriculum control is necessary... and that this control should be directed towards attaining curriculum coherence. (Oates 2010, 4 italics added)

The *necessary* relation between curriculum control and the desired coherence is again justified with reference to *established knowledge*, derived from an indeterminate corpus of transnational comparisons. Adding the clause, *a certain degree*, makes the statement imprecise enough to fit any case. This necessary relation is not reflected in Schmidt and Prawat (2006):

This paper presents data that suggests that national control of the curriculum is not necessarily associated with greater curricular coherence. (654)

In many but not all countries, policy instruments like the ones examined derive their authority from national ministries. This study shows that that need not necessarily be the case for countries like the US that choose to locate different functions at different levels. (655)

Across the 37 countries examined in this study, locating the source of curricular authority in a national ministry turned out *not to be a significant predictor* of content coherence. The positive correlation between national control and curriculum coherence obtained in other countries, this study suggests, reflects the fact that in many countries (e.g. Japan, France) ministries enjoy added cachet when it comes to pronouncements about education. (657 italics added)

It thus transpires that the key source used to support the framework states that national control of the curriculum is not strictly *necessary* to ensure the desired coherence. Given that England has a national curriculum, however, the statement in CDB might have been qualified with appeal to current arrangements and constraints. That is, if the overall aim of the system reforms is to achieve coherence across the identified control factors, refining the content of the National Curriculum is necessary, given current arrangements and constraints in the English context. Regardless, these broader control factors are used as a basis for a systematically reviewing and aligning the interrelated elements of the system to ensure that they are all 'pulling' in the same direction. Oates explained:

What lay behind the creation of the control factors, counterpoised with the explanatory factors, was that I thought that Bill Schmidt's analysis needed to go further. I asked a question, which was, 'what factors do we typically use to analyse other nations?' So I did a big factor analysis of some of the leading comparative texts in relationship to vocational education. And I found that the richest set of dimensions was present in Andy Green's work. And particularly, his book *Education and State Formation*...

If you go into work such as David Finegold's work, where he looked at the high school's equilibrium work, you find 3 or 4 factors. And if you look at David Raffe's work on the role of home internationals in system improvement, again, you find

something between Andy Green and David Finegold. So this concept of, well, what are the categories that we use to analyse other nations? And the reason I'm not into policy borrowing is because this approach gives you another route, which is... (Interview conducted 2013)

The *factor* analysis refers to a literature review, rather than a statistical analysis. The subsequent list of factors, which 'exist in complex relations and balances' (13) is indeed far more comprehensive than those provided in the work of Schmidt and Prawat. They are listed in CDB (2010) as follows:

- 1 curriculum content (national curriculum specifications, textbooks, support materials, etc.)
- 2 assessment and qualifications
- 3 national framework - system shape (e.g. routes, classes of qualifications)
- 4 inspection
- 5 pedagogy
- 6 professional development (levels and nature of teacher expertise)
- 7 institutional development
- 8 institutional forms and structures (e.g. size of schools, education phases)
- 9 allied social measures (such as that which links social care, health care and education)
- 10 funding
- 11 governance (autonomy versus direct control)
- 12 accountability arrangements
- 13 selection and gatekeeping (e.g. university admissions requirements)

Defining and disaggregating these control factors represents a first step towards taming complexity, though it is quite another thing to then articulate how they actually interact to produce outcomes. By this stage I had come to view CDB as distinct from other examples of the genre. It was mired by the same underlying issues, but more self-conscious and searching in its attempts to traverse them. Just as CDB was wary of 'crude borrowing', so it acknowledged that 'these "control factors" exist in complex relations and balances' (13). The language of critique is thus confronted directly, translated and incorporated into the system. The streamlining is continued through the identification of explanatory factors:

I split them into explanatory factors and control factors. And the control factors are those factors which are *amenable* to policy control... You know... I can't do anything about the history of England, I can't do anything about the climate... so they're explanatory factors, and I'm interested in control factors in this particular context... seeing what we learn about those systems in virtue of using those factors... [and] what we learn by applying them to our own system. (Interview conducted 2013)

Creating this dichotomy subordinates broader influences on student outcomes to the identified levers, effectively buttressing the policy core. There is a clear parallel here with the OECD's emphasis on 'operational elements'. This opens up the range of strategies used to restrict the analytic focus (*Move 3*), nuancing

the argument by demonstrating ways in which curriculum control is applied in the selected high-performing systems. CDB indicates awareness of the diversity of approaches to managing control factors:

The analysis in this paper shows how curriculum control is necessary, but can be enacted in very different ways – some systems emphasise high levels of teacher qualification, others emphasise tightly controlled curriculum materials, and so on. (2010, 4)

It thus follows other reports in the genre by emphasising that, despite variation, all systems agree on the importance of the overarching policy levers. It selects and develops those features and practices that are deemed relevant to the English context, addressing issues identified during the designation of blame. Direct comparisons unfold through a process of *selective interpretation* and the use of *incomplete stories* to maintain the narrative's overall coherence. Oates also introduces the problem of time lag:

It is a mistake to look at the success of a national system in the surveys and then assume that the country's current arrangements should be copied. In reality, we can only use the outcomes of these surveys to make claims about the form of the system which preceded the testing in these surveys - the system as it existed some years ago - i.e. the form of the system in which the 15 year olds tested in PISA were educated. (2010, 11)

This is supported by the distinction between Category 1 and Category 2 States. Category 1 States were those in which Oates stated 'we had evidence which we could link in time to a trajectory of improvement against the metrics which were present in transnational surveys', and so 'in a particular year we *could* go back in the historical record and examine the form of the education system through which those children progressed'. Category 2 states were those in which reforms were of interest but too recent to yield an effect (interview conducted 2013). This is reminiscent of the OECD's distinction between 'proven' and 'promising' practices, and the historical focus is deployed to argue that 'Finland may be departing from the very things which assured its current success, as measured through international surveys' (2010, 12).

When the selected high-performing systems do not confirm the story, an analogous mechanism for control is identified, and the causal connection with high performance is strongly asserted. For example, regarding Singapore, CDB notes that the 'national curriculum framework [is] characterised by very high level statements of aims and values, with a very obvious commitment to development of broad social skills' (10). Aspiring to replicate this focus and level

of generality is described as a ‘grave error’, as there are other ‘significant things... used for curriculum control’ (10). Specifically, CDB then argues that ‘the current success of Singapore was secured through policy tightly directed at enhancing teacher expertise and, critically, by promoting ‘curriculum coherence’ through approval of text books and teaching materials’ (2010, 10). When an analogous mechanism cannot be found, explanatory factors are (re)introduced:

Key elements of national culture allow teaching approaches of a quite unpromising kind to result in high standards – there is societal commitment to high levels of attainment, a long history of high standards of literacy and involvement in reading, and an expectation of high levels of parental involvement in learning. (2010, 10)

It is not clear whether these cultural traits have emerged since the identified periods of system development in Finland, or how they might have contributed to any perceived improvement at that time. Similar observations regarding a culture of attainment and high standards are regularly made regarding East Asian nations, but they do not temper claims regarding the effectiveness of their curriculum arrangements in CDB. As Rappleye (2015) states, ‘contexts rise up to “show us” what we want to see and are usually always dependent on what we ask of them’ (82).

Narrative coherence is thus maintained by: (1) invoking historical improvement trajectories; (2) highlighting analogous policy levers or practices that ensure control, but which are not appropriate/practical for the English setting; (3) appealing to explanatory factors, arguing that they compensate for the absence of the control factor (e.g. culture of attainment) and/or offset the negative influence of features/practices that are deemed undesirable (e.g. substandard teaching in Finland). These are combined with the strategies used to streamline complexity to create a coherent narrative of success. Ultimately, this narrative thread is then contrasted with arrangements in England to demonstrate how divergence from the story has caused the observed stasis in performance.

While causal claims remain at the circumstantial-suppositional level, Oates takes the approach to a higher theoretical level than other reports in the genre, justifying the perspective with regard to critical realism.

**(d) Critical realism & caveats**

I adopt a critical realist perspective... so I was incredibly aware of the importance of paying absolute attention to the state of development of the economy and of the society, culture, ideology in a particular national setting. Hence the interest in Bill Schmidt's work, hence the elaboration of Bill Schmidt's work, in terms of the control factors and explanatory factors... Critical realism says there are absolutely strict limitations on prediction in relation to systems... the implications of it are absolutely enormous and they apply particularly to transnational comparisons. (Interview conducted 2013)

The move towards critical realism is not unusual in CE. Margaret Archer (1995; 1996), for example, has written extensively and thoughtfully on its application to the study of social change. More recently, it has been used to develop explanations regarding outcomes in specific contexts (Tao 2013), and also to move beyond the obsession with 'what works', by posing the more nuanced question of 'what works, for whom, and in what context' (Tikly 2015). Robertson and Dale (2015) promote the use of critical realism to analyse global education policies, which would focus on 'the conjuncture of causal mechanisms and their outcomes' and the explanations of these processes (10). These studies focus on understanding and explaining the world, rather than providing a basis for transfer, or supporting processes of benchmarking. Here I focus on how the theory is harnessed to support the framework for the review of the National Curriculum.

Oates devoted a series of slides at the Cambridge Colloquium to clarify the implications of the perspective:

**Slide 6**

**No perfect knowledge**

**Multiple sources of weak evidence**

**Necessary eclecticism**

**No reification of single sources, including the outputs of transnational surveys**

**Recognising the limitations of 'ideal types'**



**Slide 7**

Stories – narrative – vital detail

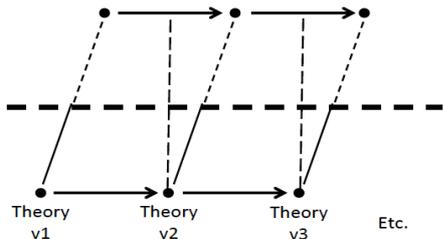
Cause – interactions – essential relations

Extrapolation – tendencies – imperfect knowledge: limits on inference that necessary effects will follow



Slide 8

### Light: Particle or wave?



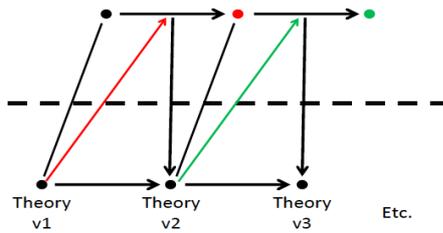
Theory v1      Theory v2      Theory v3      Etc.

Explanatory power  
Causal power  
Predictive power



Slide 9

### Women: Intelligent in the same way as men?



Theory v1      Theory v2      Theory v3      Etc.

Explanatory power  
Causal power  
No true predictive power



Slide 10

**Consequences: 1**

Achtenhagen's 'cycle of planned failure'


**Slide 11**

**Consequences: 2**

There are tendencies, not laws

Things obtain when all things are equal (*ceteris paribus*)

*Ceteris paribus* means that policy relations and adjuvant policy are both crucial



Across these slides, there are clear parallels with the qualifications identified in Chapter VII, though they are articulated at a higher theoretical level. First, and most clearly, is the statement on slide 6 that there is 'no perfect knowledge'. This caveat differs from the way in which it is used by other members of the community, and is coupled with the belief in 'essential relations', which underpin interactions between control factors and which provide a basis for managing coherence. While slide 9 indicates that we can develop both explanatory and causal understanding, this knowledge is contextual, indicative of tendencies and not laws, and predictive power is therefore beyond us due to the 'limits on inference that necessary effects will follow'.

The existence of underlying generative mechanisms enables a carefully qualified certainty. Asserting that these control factors 'exist in complex relations

and balances' sidesteps the need to specify the nature of these relationships, and further provides the basis for positioning recommendations as necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for improvement. As CDB asserts:

A well-defined and enhanced National Curriculum is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring that the performance of the English system approaches that of the leading nations. (17)

If the National Curriculum is to be refined, in order to facilitate high-quality approaches to contextualisation, task design etc., then other measures (across the list of 13 factors) will be required to ensure that such developments are realised in the system – perhaps associated with initial teaching training, or with continuing professional development, or with a new generation of textbooks – or all three of these. (16)

The burden of implementation falls with policymakers, who must ensure that each of the identified control factors line up to create a mechanism sufficient to effect the desired change. The assertion that the identified changes are not *sufficient* to effect improvement is allied with the claim that we can develop causal explanations, but not predictive power, which is confounded by explanatory variables and the unpredictable nature of social interactions. While Oates emphasised that there is 'no perfect knowledge', this is not used to promote rampant transfer. Indeed, CDB paraphrases Sebba (2004) to argue:

Stability – holding things as they are – should be treated as a policy response of equal merit to active change... since public goods can be threatened not only by failing to act but also by acting without due cause or reason. (2)

This stability, however, is deemed desirable, only 'once [the National Curriculum] has assumed the right form' (2), which would be established by the current review.

The application of generative mechanisms to this process of learning evokes Biesta's (2010) description of a 'simplistic... magic bullet notion of causality', whereby we 'assume that interventions are causes and results effects and that, under optimal conditions, the causes will necessarily generate the effects' (496). As Biesta points out, if it is possible at all in the social domain, it would only hold under very exceptional conditions. Though 'things obtain when all things are equal (*ceteris paribus*)' (slide 11), things are never equal, either in the same cases at different times, or across contexts. The question arises of whether the theory and principles were developed in response to the nature of social reality, or, whether: *in the clash between the system and reality, reality must give way.*

The appeal to the middle ground, and the subsequent search for theory and methodological tenets to support the ambition, provide an entry to the discussion. Constricted by the remit for the review, we witness the same reversal of inquiry identified in Chapter VII. From this desire to present a credible front to the story of control, begins the *post hoc* search for a compatible worldview. The co-option of critique and strategic buttressing reveal the attempt to interpret reality in a way that provides a basis for action. To question the system is to have failed to understand it. As Oates explained:

And... what constitutes knowledge of our educational system? I know it sounds terribly grand, but it is contested. I mean, heavily contested. And, I don't think it should be, because we can appeal to theory to understand the nature of the knowledge that we create, it's limitations, it's form, it's derivation, and it's power... and I find the nature of the paradigm was too reductivist and the behaviours associated with that, highly reductivist. (Interview conducted 2013)

This is an important point, and the construction of the framework was guided by the pragmatics of the political situation. Yet we must ask whether the inclusion of these caveats and limitations should excuse a framework from critical examination, and sustain its practical application on the basis that it conforms to the 'right kind of paradigm'. The framework deconstructs and compartmentalises reality in a way that is conducive to the story of control, incorporating language and concepts from authoritative fields to create a system that is closed conceptually. The truth of the system is thereby justified with regard to its presentation. Voegelin (1968) highlights an analogous move in Hegel's *Phanomenologie*, summarising it thus:

If, therefore, I can build a system, the truth of its premise is thereby established; that I can build a system on false premise is not even considered. The system is justified by the fact of its construction; the possibility of calling into question the construction of such systems, as such, is not acknowledged. (32-33)

Despite these preliminary reservations, claims regarding the distinctiveness and sophistication of the approach will be properly, and fairly, appraised in the light of the analysis of the framework's interpretation and application in the context of the review. A full appraisal is not possible in this chapter, but I will consider briefly how the process of benchmarking was pursued to lay a foundation for greater coherence across the system. Finally, I reflect on the influence this may have on the overall structure and focus of the education system in England.

***One tiny bit of one control factor: the benchmarking process***

This final section reflects on the process of curriculum mapping, and the overall influence of the NP on the direction of education reform with regard to the pattern of governance in England. CDB identified core principles for the review framework, focusing on the concept of curriculum coherence and control. These concepts were advanced with reference to existing literature, beginning with exploratory studies that had purportedly identified an association between high levels of performance and curriculum coherence. CDB states that the study of these mechanisms for coherence and control are ‘useful categories for looking at other nations’ policy arrangements’, on the basis that ‘studying the relation between them in different countries allows us to understand the operation of our own system’ (2010, 13). The following statement develops this idea:

An effective approach to improving education in England will not be associated with slavishly adopting isolated aspects of other systems. Rather, we should be concerned with scrutinising other high-performing systems in order to understand how different aspects of education policy in England can be adjusted to deliver curriculum coherence, *using a pattern of control and governance which is both suitable and effective in the English setting.* (Oates 2010, 16 italics added)

The analysis of foreign systems is therefore framed by the perceived problems with the English system, and what is practically possible given existing arrangements and constraints. The next stage of CDB identifies the underlying problems in England, primarily using domestic research to demonstrate that *curriculum overload* and *lack of clarity in curriculum statements* are interfering with curriculum coherence. The lack of clarity in curriculum content is understood to have a knock-on effect on the management and delivery of other key factors (i.e. textbooks; teaching content; pedagogy; assessment; and drivers and incentives).

The report argues that the cumulative effect of the perceived overload and lack of clarity manifests in the impoverished concept of entitlement, and the failure to improve standards. Designating blame in this way provides a clear focus for revisions to the curriculum, namely: reduce content and improve clarity, thereby providing a basis for developing coherence across the range of control factors. This path to salvation dovetails with the necessary revisions identified in the SWP (highlighted earlier in the chapter), and the coalition government’s broader reform agenda, which is guided by the approach to governance.

The expert panel report (DfE 2011) developed these broad aims to present its members' recommendations, though members differed on the degree to which their recommendations were taken up. The summary report of responses to the call for evidence provided a further basis for reflection, and a DfE team mapped the curriculum of selected-high performing systems, focusing on the issues of breadth, specificity and challenge (DfE 2012). As the report detailing the mapping stated:

The Government is reviewing the National Curriculum to ensure that it is informed by the content, standards and expectations of the highest-performing jurisdictions internationally... The purpose of this report is therefore to explore and present initial findings from an analysis of curricula of high-performing jurisdictions, in order to inform the development of the new National Curriculum for English, mathematics and science. In particular, issues of breadth, specificity and challenge within each subject are examined in detail to assess what this might tell us in the context of devising a new National Curriculum which measures up to the highest international standards. (DfE 2012, 5)

In terms of restricting the analytic focus, the mapping focuses on the perceived influence of curriculum content (*overarching lever, amenable to control*) on *quantifiable outcomes in high-performing systems*, though the actual causal relation between curriculum content (breadth, specificity and challenge) and outcomes is not explored. The report states that 'the jurisdictions were selected separately for each subject' (2), indicating a possible preference for *confirmatory cases*. A combination of *selective confirmation* and *incomplete stories* is then used to highlight the points of overlap between the proposed revisions to the National Curriculum and the breadth, specificity and challenge of the curriculum in high-performing systems. For example:

Comparing the curriculum documents for the six jurisdictions revealed significant variation in how English subject curricula are organised... *With the exception of Alberta*, the curricula are clearly organised into domains that broadly align with the four modes of communication: speaking, listening, reading and writing, although the terms used to describe these modes differ between jurisdictions. (35 italics added)

Curriculum aims are a key feature of high-performing jurisdictions, and there is also *a degree of commonality* in aims between jurisdictions for all three subjects. This indicates that curriculum aims aligned with those of high-performing jurisdictions should be considered for the new National Curriculum for each subject. (2)

There is a relatively *high degree of commonality* in the domains of knowledge for all three subjects, particularly with regard to mathematics and science. This indicates that the high-level content of the National Curriculum is broadly in line with those of high-performing jurisdictions. (2)

The commonalities identified in the mapping are thus not left as hanging observations, but are used to suggest that aligning the National Curriculum with high-performing systems may improve performance. This is strengthened by contrasting the observed trends in high-performing systems with current arrangements in England. The process of mapping does not ‘slavishly borrow’ these features but is used to argue that the nature of the proposed revisions to the curriculum is reflected in the selected high-performing jurisdictions. The report detailing the curriculum mapping (DfE 2012) emphasises the importance of understanding broader factors that may influence student attainment in the featured cases:

This report forms part of a suite of evidence documents gathered as part of the review... Further analysis is underway to examine the education systems and cultural contexts of high-performing jurisdictions, in order to assess what other factors need to be taken into account when comparing the relative achievement of pupils from different jurisdictions. (1)

The ‘further analysis’ involved an exploration of a ‘wide range of factors that relate to both the given education system and the society served by this education system for a range of comparator jurisdictions’, including: cultural and demographic contexts, the structure of schooling, accountability and assessment systems, and how the statutory curriculum is implemented in schools (DfE 2012, 13). As this background work is unpublished, it is hard to determine *how*, by *whom*, and *when* this parallel investigation was handled, and how the insights were used to nuance explanations and to inform proposals.

Much of the actual discussion and debate is not on record and is inevitably lost in the simplified format in which proposals were presented. As Oates reflected:

We did have a discussion about high performance, we did have a discussion about selection... and I had to set the analysts rolling pretty quickly on doing the curriculum mapping... the mapping is all written up. The trouble is that, because the mapping is one of the few tangible forms of the outcome people think, oh, “they did the mapping, therefore they just replicated the Singapore curriculum in England”. But it’s just not like that. But it’s because it’s a tangible, so they look at it and make assumptions. And the trouble is we haven’t written anything to disturb those assumptions, so it’s entirely legitimate that they reach those assumptions. (Interview conducted 2013)

Initial inquiry pointed towards the team of research analysts at the DfE who were responsible for compiling the further analysis. One DfE official noted that ‘there was a lot of work done looking at other systems’, but that it was ‘only looking at the policy rather than the implementation. So it was drawing down evidence on

websites at what's happening in other countries rather than looking on the ground in detail' (interview conducted 2014). The other DfE official interviewed stated that rather than emphasise differences, the review team asked the question: 'was England different enough to not have the same level of expectation as in these high-performing jurisdictions?' The official continued, 'And we concluded that it wasn't, that it was generally somewhere in the middle... except for system size' (interview conducted 2014). This is an interesting inversion of the problem, and certainly a more pragmatic way of handling context and complexity, given the clear statement of aims. As the official stated, 'you can paper over the cracks by just saying that, "of course, these factors all interact"' (interview conducted 2014).

The DfE (2012) report detailing the curriculum mapping offers further qualifications:

In order to improve pupil attainment, Tim Oates argues that a coherent and conceptually well-defined statutory curriculum is a necessary though not sufficient condition... Reform of the National Curriculum can have an impact on raising standards, so long as other reforms are put in place to ensure that the curriculum can be delivered effectively by teachers and the accountability system puts sufficient focus on the quality of teaching. (DfE 2012, 7-8)

This relates to the emphasis on curriculum coherence, with the content of the National Curriculum only featuring as one part of the first of thirteen control factors. As Tim Oates stated:

I pressed on Michael Gove that the National Curriculum was just one tiny bit of one control factor and articulating policy alignment across all the factors was fundamental so, as important as it was, as important that the National Curriculum is, it's just one tiny bit of factor one. (Interview conducted 2013)

While aligning curriculum content with high-performing systems in this way is not a sufficient condition for improvement, it plays a pivotal role in the development of the system as a whole, as the remaining control factors must be reformed to reinforce the curriculum content. This is highlighted by the emphasis on using textbooks to minimise divergent interpretations (part two of control factor one), and the new generation of textbooks recently approved to guide instruction (Gibb 2014). Nick Gibb described Oates as 'hugely influential', specifically highlighting 'the point that your curriculum has to be coherent' (interview conducted 2013). One of the DfE officials confirmed the influence of the framework:

We did take Tim's point, as did ministers, about control factors... this is demonstrated by the fact that we have developed a curriculum which is framed in a way that defines the tests, that defines the GCSE's that are most relevant, that then defines the accountability system for schools, which is all going to come in over the next three to four years. So the proof is not in the pudding yet. (Interview conducted 2014)

Once the outcomes have been determined, and targets set accordingly, the concept of aligning the different aspects of curriculum, assessment, resources and pedagogy, so that they all complement one another represents common sense. Certainly, as the OECD might say, it is *intuitively plausible* that orienting the entire system towards improving student outcomes on a specific test will raise their outcomes on that test. In this way, the outcomes of interest become the focal point of the system, with each of the control elements aligned in turn to reinforce this core aim to ensure overall coherence.

It is important to note that many of those interviewed highlighted the vagaries of the political system, which is characterised by short-termism and serial reform. More fundamentally, interviewees expressed clear doubts about the ability to translate the vision into the design of the system, and then into practice. The role of assessment presents an example. Nick Gibb noted that Ofqual is expected to maintain standards over time and between subjects, before stating, 'and we [the coalition] added, "and there should be an international objective as well"' (interview conducted 2013). The NFER analyst noted how the various awarding bodies were asked to develop the assessment curriculum, which the analyst described as 'effectively... the real National Curriculum', and elaborated on the process:

In England, what happens is there's a policy, and there's a speech, and then it gets passed down, and then when it actually gets to the implementation stage it might be, somebody from Ofqual has a word with somebody or a letter comes through, so it passes through quite a lot of translation stages... We [NFER] were working with the awarding bodies to help them translate what they felt was a slightly vague steer that they had to do something that was internationally minded, and represented international best practice, but without any clear statement of what that was. (Interview conducted 2014)

I close on this point merely to highlight the gap between policy intent and enactment, and to acknowledge that although the focus had been on ensuring coherence and control on the outcomes of interest, the level of understanding and the execution of this vision was not necessarily reflected across the system. Since the departure of Michael Gove, the vision has continued to break down. Regardless, my focus in this chapter has primarily been on the role of the NP in

the review of the National Curriculum, the construction of the framework for learning, and then exploring how international comparisons were harnessed to support the story of control.

***Summary: Reflections on the review***

This chapter focused on the influence of the NP on two main levels. At the macro-level, it outlined the institutionalization of the storyline in the review of the National Curriculum. The review process was situated within the broader package of reforms outlined in the SWP, which was framed by the approach to governance. In this respect, the NP was drawn into the role of conceptual maintenance and Tim Oates fulfilled the role of expert in legitimation. Despite awareness of alternate frames, I argued that key actors viewed the construct as the reality *par excellence*, were true believers in the storyline, and sincere in their attempt to play their role and to guide the nation towards its idealised future.

The analysis revealed a familiar pattern of moves and strategies, though Oates developed a way of *talking about* international comparisons which drew on credible principles from the philosophy of science, and which used scholarly references from outside the NP. This may reflect 'the possibility of referring to one genre while using another' (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 1999, 10), or the common tendency for genre's to incorporate aspects of antecedent, or related genres. Other reports make similar moves but do not provide any theoretical basis to support them. Instead, they rely on precedents from business management and techniques pioneered in industrial benchmarking to support the approach.

In contrast, Oates makes the pragmatic distinction between control and explanatory factors, and the complex and unpredictable nature of the 'essential relations' between these factors is stressed, though it is not explored. Positioning the approach as '*analytic* transnational comparison' implies the supreme logic of the approach, and revising the curriculum was positioned as a necessary but not sufficient condition for improvement. The appeal to critical realism represents the outstanding innovation of the genre so far, used to preserve the demand to exert control while accepting our helplessness over outcomes. Comprehensive expression of the limitations on knowledge tie up the loose ends, giving a ready response to any objection.

The way in which the concepts of coherence and control were harnessed to support this greater end suggests that the focus on international surveys may result in a narrowing of education goals. While the core curriculum is not intended to cover everything that is taught, schools are not judged on whether students hit the basic standard, but with regard to how they perform relative to other schools on the subjects that are ‘most relevant’. This process is deemed necessary if the nation is to avert a tragic ending, and to avoid being ‘blindsided by the global knowledge economy’. It is apt to close by returning to the OECD’s vision for the future of education reform, drawing on the reflections of the DfE official involved in the review:

A good intellectual question we asked ourselves internally was, and this is something the special advisors asked: why couldn’t we just have the national curriculum, in English, from such and such a place? Why not take the best national curriculum in any nation state and just have that as the curriculum? Why doesn’t the OECD just publish what they think is the perfect curriculum for all these subjects, and nation states could just buy into it? I mean, they do with the [PISA] tests already. (Interview conducted 2014)

This standardization has implications for the future of comparative research, undermining the scope to explore other horizons. The implications are increasingly felt within academic institutions in England, where Ball (2007) states that the question for researchers is whether we ‘make ourselves useful technicians of social management, or... reinvent ourselves as intellectuals and cultural critics?’ (118). As Hyslop-Marginson and Naseem (2007) observe, ‘pressure to secure research grants... encourages researchers to operate within the confines of existing theoretical constructs to achieve recognition’ (115). Researchers are encouraged to amend both their research focus and their approach, enabling them to demonstrate impact and to secure funding (Roberts 2007), thereby tying ‘educational research to a fairly narrow remit, concerned with the improvement of practice’ (Avis 2006, 109).

With these inducements, success rests largely on adopting ‘the right sort paradigm’, and researchers are encouraged to subscribe to the storyline, to find meaning through participation in the *xynon*, and to reinforce the established order.

## Chapter IX

### Conclusion

#### **Introduction**

This thesis sought to bring clarity to a phenomenon that has become increasingly dominant in research and policy circles, but is not well understood. Summaries of the analysis at each stage have been included at the end of the relevant chapters. This final chapter serves three main functions. First, it summarises the preceding chapters. Second, it clarifies the overall contribution to the literature, and highlights limitations and areas for future research. Finally, it connects the analysis back to the broader aspiration of global governance, and reflects on prospects for the future.

The search for the 'essential clarity' unfolded across a number of stages and levels. The aim was not to provide definitive answers, but to problematize a phenomenon that is increasingly taken as granted. Casting advocates and researchers engaging with the NP as protagonists in this broader storyline enabled exploration of how the pressures it exerts influences the shape of the field. In keeping with this theme, it is important to recognise my own role. In the introductory chapter, I highlighted the challenge to the assumptions underpinning my ordinary world, and the thesis was largely an exploration of this foreign horizon.

As a doctoral student, I have been able to spend the past three years largely as an outsider looking in on the NP. I was not subject to the pressures or expectations that permeate the halls of academia, or professional organisations, or indeed political processes. Moreover, my approach and perspective was coloured by my experience: a background in philosophy; years spent teaching overseas; and an MA in Comparative Education at the UCL Institute of Education. It is possible that I have sought meaning through the construction of this peculiar myth, and by undermining the beliefs of other communities.

I now retrace the main thread of the argument in this thesis, and highlight the instruments and tools that I have utilised and developed in an attempt to open up new possibilities for understanding and engaging with the NP.

#### ***Summary of chapters***

Together, chapters II-V address RQ1. Chapter II identified the NP as a comparative genre, with the actors engaging with its communicative purpose

forming a discourse community. The genre was identified as a form of advocacy, focused on persuasion rather than explanation. I emphasised the central role of narratives in policymaking and argumentation, and introduced the concept of *homo narrans*, which provided a foundation for the subsequent phases of inquiry. The overlap between policy, discourse and narrative was clarified, and the NP was situated within the decline-control storyline that characterises contemporary governance in England.

Chapter III developed a schema of plot structure and narrative fabric. I argued that this narrative fabric is tailored by policymakers and advocates to promote reforms, and identified some basic criteria for judging narrative 'quality'. In Chapter IV, individuals engaging with the NP were identified as forming a discourse coalition, united by shared storylines. I distinguished between three broad levels of activity, and then introduced the NPF's guidelines for multi-level analysis.

Chapter V presented a series of analytic categories focusing on the NP's characteristics: *rationale*, *assumptions*, and *underlying ideology*. The exploration of the NP's characteristics then turned to the existential aspect of *homo narrans*, exploring the storyline's symbolic properties. These were attributed to the attempt to inject history with meaning, and the desire for self-salvation. The chapter closed by highlighting the fundamental tension in the storyline, which researchers engaging with the genre would be forced to reconcile: *the mystery of the stream of being is impenetrable*.

Chapter VI began to address RQ2, outlining the creation of the calculable world before moving to clarify the paradox of control inherent in the communicative purpose. The preliminary analysis further identified that advocates commonly expressed awareness of the paradox, but contrived to marginalise or circumvent the issues. Moving the analysis to the psychological level, the underlying reasons for this were explored with regard to the philosophy of history and of consciousness.

Chapter VII addressed RQ2 directly. The analysis was framed by the schema of plot developed in Chapter III, and within this schema, a series of common moves and strategies were identified. These moves and strategies were used to (a) establish a platform for advocacy, and (b) deal with the core issues directly. The strategies enabled the delivery of straightforward narratives that could be used to promote reform, but which required advocates to (re)interpret the nature

of social reality to support the system of governance: *in the battle between the system and reality, reality must give way.*

Chapter VIII addressed RQ3 across two main levels. First, it argued that the review of the National Curriculum represented the institutionalization of the NP in England. It demonstrated how the remit marginalised heretical perspectives and/or research approaches. The analysis then turned to explore the construction of a framework for learning, focusing on CE as a tool for conceptual maintenance. The analysis revealed a similar range of moves and strategies to Chapter VII, whereby reality was brought into a system that enabled the development of a straightforward narrative of control.

### ***Research contribution, Limitations and future directions***

*Knowledge grows in spots. It is also provisional, and apt to change...*

Here I restate the main respects in which the thesis aims to contribute, highlight its limitations, and present some possibilities for future research. The analysis focused on the characteristics of the NP, and how knowledge is *being done*. Demystifying the NP has practical implications, and the schema of plot and framework of moves/strategies may improve engagement with the NP in academic and professional circles. Given the NP's growing influence in academic institutions this provides an important basis for reflexivity. As Voegelin (1968) points out, presentation of the phenomenon offers an opportunity for reflection, 'furnish[ing] the remedy for it through therapeutic analysis' (17).

One of the initial problems was the lack of clarity regarding the conceptual and theoretical ties between disparate actors engaging with the NP. By focusing on their shared storyline and identifying its implicit assumptions and beliefs, the thesis has begun to address this void. Fischer (1998) claims that 'one of the primary strengths of a theory... is its ability to establish discursive connections and to contrive equivalences between otherwise disparate elements, as well as incorporating new components' (136). Focusing at the level of discourse coalitions, and distinguishing levels and realms of activity, as well as common characteristics and moves, provides a platform for studies concerned more concretely with processes of advocacy and transfer, and the movement of "global" education policies.

The move towards political science connects to recent literature that promotes comparative policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi 2012; Lao 2015). These

studies have thus far combined Kingdon's 'multiple streams' and the ACF's system of beliefs with the concept of socio-logic to analyse cases of transfer. The thesis complements and develops these studies, recognising that beliefs are embedded in narratives, and that these are central to the process of persuasion in both advocacy and policymaking. By laying out the schema of plot, the analysis begins to develop a platform for exploring the promotion and (re)interpretation of these narratives across the multiple levels of policy. The analysis also developed the political science literature in several key respects, operationalizing the concept of plot and demonstrating how it may be used to identify a community's characteristics and underlying beliefs.

Focusing on the existential undercurrent to the storyline provides another level for reflection on the forces shaping the field, and the history of CE. This corresponds with Rappleye's (2012) suggestion that we add the question of '*how comparativists of the past have dealt with the unknown*' (444) to Cowen's (2002) 'unit ideas' of the field. Voegelin's (1972) analysis of the implications of the Ecumenic Age may be further enriched by other studies in the area (e.g. Jaspers 1949; Bellah and Joas 2012; Eisenstadt 1986; Mumford 1967, 1970), providing a further basis for reflection on 'the global', by which contemporary processes of globalization are traced through divergent historical experiences. Research into contemporary processes of globalisation, and the interaction between global and local imaginaries (Lingard and Rizvi 2010) may thus benefit from the insights of comparative philosophy.

While the study has opened up fresh insights, it also has clear limitations. I highlight some of these now, and consider how future studies may address them.

*Schema of plot and narrative fabric:* The schema is provisional and clearly cannot capture the innumerable stories told by coalition members and policymakers across diverse contexts. It is presented as a guide for deconstructing narratives into their constituent elements, exploring discursive connections, and identifying implicit assumptions and beliefs. The schema could be improved and refined in light of its application in subsequent analyses that focus on a broader range of coalition members, or sub-coalitions, and across a range of contexts.

*Strategies and sub-coalitions:* When investigating how coalition members overcame the issues associated with transfer, I faced the choice of whether to focus on a small number of examples in greater depth, or cast the net wider to

develop a representative overview of moves and strategies. Having opted for the latter, future research may focus on the full tranche of publications by specific coalition members, and/or the overlapping storylines of sub-coalitions, advocacy coalitions and/or networks. Such studies might pay greater attention to actors' backgrounds and agendas, and focus across the multiple levels in a given context.

*Structuration-institutionalization and conversion:* The thesis has not explored how members of a discourse coalition actually combine to shape debates and influence outcomes in a specific context. In Chapter VIII, the analysis picked up largely after the story had already achieved structuration in England. Case studies of specific actors or sub-coalitions/networks (including media etc.) may be combined with multi-level analysis in a specific context to explore the process, focusing on global policies or specific contexts. Cases of whole-system reform are underway (e.g. in Bahrain) and arguably constitute a new phenomenon in transfer. These might be explored with regard to Cowen's (2000) concept of 'transitologies'.

*The review of the National Curriculum:* I did not explore the process of implementation, and a further round of interviews may aid reflection on the actual outcomes of the process. Moreover, I did not explore alternate storylines or coalitions in England, or the influence of the media. The story schema may be used as a basis for analysing conflict in policy debates. For example, I intend to analyse the fall out of the expert panel by contrasting the schema of plot and narrative fabric that infused the remit for the review with the alternate storylines and agendas of panel members. These divergent storylines (and alternate frames) may be systematically compared using techniques from Rein and Schon's (1994) *Frame Reflection*.

*Actor cognizance:* I acknowledged the chasm between what is *abstractly true* and what is *existentially real* for the given living person. This concession was necessary, given the focus on the existential aspect of *homo narrans*. It also relates to Rappleye's (2015) call for sensitivity to individual actors' experience of reality, utilising the insights of phenomenology. Though I drew on a range of theory that aided interpretation of the moves and strategies identified in the analysis, this does not provide concrete insight into the individual's experience of reality. I attempted to address the issue of actor cognizance when investigating the review of the National Curriculum, and future studies might

pursue this interest with regard to members of the coalition, political actors, or groups in a given context.

***End Game: Pink clouds and the dream of global governance***

I have explored the characteristics and modus operandi of the NP, unpacking the story in which it is embedded, and identifying a range of strategies used to identify and promote 'best practices'. I close by considering the broader implications of the preceding analysis, the self-defeating nature of the storyline, and the fortunate and fatal futures that may lie ahead. This relates to the ultimate expression of the impulse underlying the NP, which manifests in the aspiration of global governance, *the obsession of replacing the world of reality by the transfigured dream world*.

In the latest incarnation of the aspiration, the UN's post-2015 goals have moved from emphasising "access" to "quality", a shift which will support the NP through the introduction of clear targets on core competencies, extending and entrenching the calculable world. At the level of frame sponsorship, the OECD and World Bank are currently working in conjunction with a number of national development agencies (e.g. UK, France, Germany, South Korea) to extend the reach of the storyline through the introduction of *PISA for Development*. This new metric will be anchored to the post-2015 goals, ranking systems on the selected competencies and allowing donor agencies to measure performance and track progress.

The first rounds will identify winners and losers, and then improvers, galvanising the search for 'what works', and further legitimising and entrenching the activity of the development industry. Consultancies and entrepreneurs will emerge to identify 'best (development) practice' and thereby put each nation's house in order, selling both their expertise and services to give systems a competitive advantage. The project of new global management will continue to support the appearance of new prophets and missionaries: experts who know what heaven looks like, and who, for a small price, will impart their formula for self-salvation. System development will be oriented towards improvement on the chosen measurements, with any gains in outcomes used to demonstrate the legitimacy of the enterprise.

Although, the OECD presents this as people from all around the world coming together to work for a better world economy, the race to the top is a zero-sum game: *there is only so much space in heaven*. The slices of utopia

that comprise the focal point of the pilgrimage are never static long enough to be attained, and any movement towards the goal is offset by the potential progress of competitors. Robertson (2011) points out that ‘the utopian vision at the core of neo-liberalism—of a free market and free economy—is ultimately unrealizable’ (5). The cyclical competition results in what Pongratz (2006) terms, in an apparent allusion to Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*, ‘the empty transcendence of “the will to quality”’ (481).

In this respect, the PISA cycle closely resembles the *Myth of Sisyphus*, in which the eponymous hero is punished by the gods and must spend eternity rolling a boulder to the summit of a hill, whereby the boulder promptly rolls down the other side and he must begin the task anew. Cupitt (1991) confronts this contradiction in the context of theology, asking: ‘if religious thought is inherently paradoxical, so that every expedition that sets off in search of transcendence can only end with the inevitable return into immanence, why go on with it?’ (138). While Cupitt suggests that the quest for transcendence may represent the *felix culpa* (i.e. happy flaw), a life-affirming mistake that we must keep on making, May (1991) offers another possibility, reflecting on the plight of Sisyphus:

Sisyphus... must have noticed in his trips some wisp of pink cloud that heralds the dawn, or felt some pleasure in the wind against his breast as he strode down the hill after his rock, or remembered some line of poetry to muse upon. Indeed, he must have thought of some myth to make sense of an otherwise senseless world. (146)

This returns to the primary significance of myths, which instil order and meaning into society, and into the fact of existence. And yet, there is a fragility to this mythic journey, *The Polity’s Progress*. Federici (2002) notes that ‘at some point, individuals lose their patience waiting for dreams to come true’ (71), and to sustain faith in the vision, actors must believe that the idealised future is, in principle, attainable. This tenuous bond of faith rests on both the substance of things hoped for, and the proof of things unseen. While the storyline inspires hope that pink clouds may yet appear to herald the dawn, Voegelin points out that ‘errors with regard to the structure of reality have practical consequences when made the basis of political action’ (166). Both the construction of the calculable world, and the various formula(s) for salvation, obscure crucial segments of reality.

The narrative ignores the historic imbalances of power that continue to dictate the economic fate of individuals and nations. At the same time, Brown

and Lauder (2012) argue that ‘the rise in the value of knowledge, predicted by commentators in the West, [has] failed to materialize’, and that the ‘global auction for cut-price brain power’ is exerting pressure on the middle classes in the US and Europe, where ‘the maxim that ‘learning equals earning’ is becoming increasingly hollow. As they argue, ‘the promise of the good life for those with ability and the willingness to work hard has been broken’ (5-6). Aside from the direct social and economic costs of orienting education towards the prescribed vision, a further question arises: *What happens if/when the utopia promised by the dream world cannot be realised?*

Maca and Morris (2012) identify how tension in the storyline has been relieved in the Philippines, by valorising the migrant workers whose remittances prop up the domestic economy. In a masterclass in spin, the World Bank (2015)<sup>45</sup> now positions remittances as a key strategy for development, undermining the OECD’s vision of a meritocratic global knowledge economy. Elsewhere, Rappleye (2010) has explored the relation between Western-led development projects and conflict in Nepal, where successive generations of education missionaries reworked the fragile infrastructure without taking the reality of the context into account, culminating in the Nepali civil war (1996-2006). More recently, the contradiction in the storyline has been recognised in the media, with Panjak Mishra (2015)<sup>46</sup> reflecting on the horror of recent terror attacks:

In the neoliberal fantasy of individualism, everyone was supposed to be an entrepreneur, retraining and repackaging themselves in a dynamic economy, perpetually alert to the latter’s technological revolutions... Significantly numerous members of the precariat realise today that there is no such thing as a level playing field. The number of superfluous young people condemned to the anteroom of the modern world... has grown exponentially in recent decades, especially in Asia and Africa’s youthful societies... More and more people feel the gap between the profligate promises of individual freedom and sovereignty, and the incapacity of their political and economic organisations to realise them.

Whether inspired by true belief in a grand encompassing vision for the future, and the possibility of self-salvation, or a more pragmatic pursuit of profit and personal gain, the self-defeating nature of the gospel remains. Voegelin argues that the ‘dream obsession’ makes it impossible to formulate policies that take into account the nature of reality, arguing that ‘[Western] foreign policy [has

---

<sup>45</sup> World Bank (2015), *Migration and Development Brief*  
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief24.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Pankaj Mishra, How to Think About Islamic State, *The Guardian* 24.07.2015  
<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/24/how-to-think-about-islamic-state>

been] a factor in aggravating international disorder' (51) and speculating that: 'either it will result in horrible physical destructions and concomitant revolutionary changes of social order beyond reasonable guesses; or, with the natural change of generations, it will lead to the abandoning of the... dreaming before the worst has happened.' (173).

Concerted processes of research steering and the aggressive expansion of neoliberal governance suggests that the window for the latter of these possibilities may be narrowing. By viewing other systems through the prism of PISA, *learning* is constricted to the primary reality of the established frame, closing out alternatives. In contrast, Dale (2015) argues that 'the potential power of CE lies fundamentally in providing different ways of seeing the world' (356). Similarly Altbach (1991) suggests that CE 'broadens horizons', arguing that though it may stimulate alternative thinking, it is seldom a guide to direct policy. This kind of learning is characterised by openness to other traditions and perspectives, and evokes Voegelin's concept of the 'horizon of consciousness':

The quality of the horizon will depend on the analyst's willingness to reach out into all the dimensions of the reality in which the conscious existence is an event, it will depend on his desire to know. A consciousness of this kind is not an a priori structure, nor does it just happen, nor is its horizon given. It rather is a ceaseless action of expanding, ordering, articulating, and correcting itself; it is an event in the reality of which it partakes. It is a permanent effort at responsive openness to the appeal of reality, at bewareing of premature satisfaction, and above all at avoiding the self-destructive phantasy of believing the reality of which it is a part to be an object external to itself that can be mastered by bringing it into the form of a system. (Voegelin 1978, 4)

CE is well placed to aid this reflective process, cultivating an intellectual disposition that is open to other ways of seeing the world.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Example information sheet (interviewees)



Leading education  
and social research  
Institute of Education  
University of London

#### INFORMATION SHEET

**Study Title:** Science, storytelling and the politics of expertise: the role of 'comparative education' in the manufacture and advocacy of 'best practice'

**Researcher:** Euan Auld

**Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.**

#### **The researcher**

PhD student at the Institute of Education, University of London, and the recipient of an ESRC studentship.

#### **The research**

This research investigates developments in the form and application of comparative education within the broader context of evidence-based policymaking in England (1980s-present day). It notes the failure of 'academic' comparative education to adequately respond to the demand for evidence to inform policy decisions, and identifies an emerging network of practitioners that has responded to service this demand. This contemporary version of applied (policy-oriented) comparative education has been referred to as a 'New Paradigm'. The thesis explores the emergence of this 'New Paradigm', its characteristics, and the role that it plays in contemporary policymaking in England.

Focusing on the interrelation between educational research and policy, the thesis begins by tracing the growing profile of this 'New Paradigm' (mid-1980s onwards), laying out the broader conditions from which it has emerged. It then explores how the 'New Paradigm' operates, using principles from genre analysis to analyse a series of reports and to identify common/divergent characteristics of their discourse and methodology. The final stage of the thesis explores the role of the 'New Paradigm' at the level of policy, taking the review of the National Curriculum as a case study and using the preceding analysis to frame the investigation.

The case study will involve documentary analysis and interviews with key individuals involved in the review. I would like to discuss your experiences as a member of the Expert Panel for the review of the National Curriculum, and your perspective on international comparisons more generally. This will allow me to reflect critically on the preceding analysis, and to develop a balanced perspective on the role of international comparisons in the reform process. Given your expertise in educational research and your direct experience of the policymaking process, your participation would be invaluable to my research.

**Participants**

To begin, I will be interviewing members of the Expert Panel for the review of the National Curriculum. Depending on access, I hope to interview individuals involved at other stages of the review process, including DfE officials and senior civil servants.

**Process**

The interview will last no more than an hour. In the interview I would like to discuss your perspective on international comparisons and educational policymaking in general, and draw on your experiences as a member of the Expert Panel for the review of the National Curriculum. If you agree, the interview will be voice recorded.

**Confidentiality/anonymity**

It will not be possible to guarantee confidentiality, given the nature of the research.

**Option to withdraw**

If you change your mind about participating in the research you have the right to stop and withdraw from the research at any point.

**Potential problems**

I do not foresee any problems arising, but understand that there may be some topics you do not want to discuss. If you have any problems or concerns about the research, please contact me and I will address your concerns accordingly.

**After the interview**

If you are interested, I would like to send you the interview record and final findings when I finish my thesis. If I am planning to use the data to inform future publications, I will seek your consent in advance.

[my contact details]

## Appendix 2. Example Consent Form (interviewees)



Leading education  
and social research

Institute of Education  
University of London

### CONSENT FORM (Interviewee)

**Study title:** Science, storytelling and the politics of expertise: the role of 'comparative education' in the manufacture and advocacy of 'best practice'

**Researcher name:** Euan Auld

**Department of Lifelong and Comparative Education**

**Faculty of Policy and Society**

**Email:** eauld@outlook.com

*Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):*

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I agree to be interviewed and agree for the data to be used for the purpose of this study

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I could withdraw from the research at any time without my legal rights being affected.

### **Data Protection**

*I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.*

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....  
.....

Name of researcher (print name).....

Signature of researcher.....

Date.....

## Bibliography

- Abell, P. (2004). Narrative explanation: an alternative to variable-centred explanation? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, pp. 287-310.
- Abbott, H. P. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adonis, A. (2012). *Education, education, education: reforming England's schools*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Ahrne, G. and N. Brunsson (2006). Organizing the World, in M.-L. Djelic & Salin-Andersson, K. (Eds.) *Transnational Governance: Institutional Dynamics of Regulation*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 74-94.
- Alexander, R. J. (2000). *Other primary schools and ours: hazards of international comparison*. Coventry: CREPE.
- Alexander, R. J. (2000). *Culture and pedagogy: international comparisons in primary education*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Alexander, R. J. (2001). Border crossings: towards a comparative pedagogy, *Comparative Education*, 37(4), pp. 507-523.
- Alexander, R. J. (Ed.) (2009). *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*. London: Routledge.
- Alexander, R. J. (2010). 'World class schools' - noble aspiration or globalised hokum? BAICE Presidential Address at the 10th UKFIET Conference on Education and Development 2009, *Compare* 40(6), pp. 801-817.
- Alexander, R. J. (2011). Evidence, rhetoric and collateral damage: the problematic pursuit of 'world class' standards, *Cambridge Journal of Education* 41(3), pp. 256-286.
- Alexander, R. J. (2012). Moral panic, Miracle Cures and Educational Policy: what can we really learn from international comparison? *Scottish Educational Review*, 44 (1), pp. 4-21.
- Allias, S. 2012. 'Economics imperialism', educational policy, and educational theory, *Journal of Education Policy*, 27 (2), pp. 253–274.
- Altbach, P. G. (1991). Preface, in *The Confucian continuum: educational modernization in Taiwan*, D. Smith (Ed.). New York: Praeger.
- Anderson, W. T. (1995). *The truth about the truth: de-confusing and reconstructing the postmodern world*. New York: Putnam
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Archer, M. (1995). *Realist social theory: the morphogenetic approach*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- Archer, M. (1996). *Culture and agency: the place of culture in social theory (revised edition)*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Aristotle (1996). *Poetics*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Aron, R. (1957). *The opium of the intellectuals*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Auld, E. and P. Morris (2014). Comparative education, the 'New Paradigm' and Policy Borrowing: Constructing Knowledge for Education Reform, *Comparative Education*, 50(2), pp. 129-155.

- Bacchi, C. (2000). Policy as Discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us?, *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 21(1), pp. 45-57.
- Baker, M. (2010). Gove takes control of the curriculum, in *The Guardian* online. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/jun/15/schools-curriculum-michael-gove> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)
- Ball, S. J. (1990). *Politics and policymaking in education*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (1995). Intellectuals or technicians? The urgent role of theory in educational studies, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 43(3), pp. 255-271.
- Ball, S. J. (1998). Big policies / small world: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy, *Comparative Education* 34(2), pp. 119-130.
- Ball, S. (2007). *Education plc: Understanding private sector participation in public sector education*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2008). New Philanthropy, New Networks and New Governance in Education, *Political Studies*, 56(4), pp. 747-765.
- Ball, S. J. and S. Exley (2011). Making Policy with 'Good Ideas': Policy Networks and the 'Intellectuals' of New Labour, *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(2), pp. 151-169.
- Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global education inc.: new policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (2013). *The Education Debate*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Barber, M. (2014). Data Work (Michael Barber in Conversation with Jenny Ozga), in Fenwick, T., Mangez, E. and Ozga, J. (Eds.) (2014) *Governing knowledge: comparison, knowledge-based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education (World Yearbook of Education 2014)* . London: Routledge, pp. 75-86.
- Barber, M., K. Donnelly, and S. Rizvi (2013) *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.
- Barber, M., Kihn, P., & Moffit, A. (2011). *Deliverology: from idea to implementation*. London: McKinsey Education.
- Barbour, I. G. (1974). *Myths, models and paradigms: the nature of scientific and religious language*. London: SCM Press LTD.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., & Nickerson, C. (1999). Business writing as social action, in Bargiela-Chiappini, F., & Nickerson, C. (Eds.) *Writing Business: Genres, Media and Discourses*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Barker, B. (2007). The leadership paradox: can school leaders transform student outcomes. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 18(1), pp. 21-43.
- Barnes, B., & Edge, D. (1982). Science as expertise, in Barnes, B., & Edge, D. (Eds.) *Science in Context: Readings in the Sociology of Science*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press: 233-249.
- Barnett, M.N., & Finnemore, M. (1999). The politics, power and pathologies of international organizations, *International Organization*, 53(4), pp. 699-732.

- Barnett, M., & Finnemore, M. (2004). *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell UP,
- Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: the genre and activity of the experimental article in science*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bazerman, C. (2004). Speech acts, genres, and activity systems: how texts organize activity and people, in Bazerman, C., & Prior, P. (Eds.) *What Writing Does and How it Does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices*. London: Routledge, pp. 309-339.
- Becker, G. (1964). *Human capital: a theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Beech, J., & Larsen, M. A. (2014). Replacing old spatial empires of the mind. *European Education*, 46(1), pp. 75-94.
- Bellah, R. N., & Joas, Hans. (Eds.) (2012). *The axial age and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bennet, C. J. (1997). Understanding ripple effects: the cross-national adoption of policy instruments for bureaucratic accountability, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 10(3): 213-233.
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. S. (1957). *The Social Construction of Reality: A treatise on the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.
- Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. (1995). *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition/Culture/Power*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bhatia, V. (1993). *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman.
- Biesta, G. J. J., & Burbules, N. (2003). *Pragmatism and educational research*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Biesta, G. J. J. (2010). Why 'what works' still won't work: from evidence-based Education to Value-Based Education, *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 29: 491-503.
- Bloor, D. (1982). Formal and informal thought, in Barnes, B. & Edge, D. (Eds.) *Science in context: readings in the sociology of science*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, pp. 117-124.
- Blunkett, D. (2000). Influence or Irrelevance, *Research Intelligence*, 71, pp. 12-21.
- Bochel, C. (2011). The Conservatives and the governance of social policy, in Bochel, H. (Ed.) *The Conservative Party and Social Policy*. Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 251-268.
- Bold, C. (2012). *Using narrative in research*. London: Sage.
- Booker, C. (2004). *The seven basic plots: why we tell stories*. London: Continuum.
- Bray, M., & Thomas, R. M. (1995). Levels of comparison in educational studies: Different insights from different literatures and the value of multilevel analyses. *Harvard Education Review*, 65(3), 472-490.
- Bridges, D., Smeyers, P., & Smith, R. (2009). Educational Research and the Practical Judgement of Policy-Makers, in Bridges, D., Smeyers, P., & Smith, R (Eds.) *Evidence-based education policy: What evidence? What basis? Whose policy?*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 1-10.

- Brown, P., & Lauder, H. (2012) *The global auction: the broken promises of education, jobs, and incomes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, P. & Tannock, S. (2009) Education, meritocracy and the global war for talent, *Journal of Education Policy* 24(4): 377-392.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buchstein, H. & Jorke, D. (2012). The argumentative turn toward deliberative democracy: Habermas's contribution and the Foucauldian critique, in Fischer, F., & Gottweis, H. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn revisited: public policy as communicative practice*. Duke University Press: London, pp. 271-304.
- Campbell, J. (1949). *The hero with a thousand faces*. New York: Pantheon Books. Reprint, Novato, New World Library (2008)
- Carney, S. (2012). Imagining globalisation: educational policyscapes, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 339-353.
- Carney, S., Rappleye, J. & Silova, I. (2012). Between faith and science: world culture theory and comparative education, *Comparative Education Review*, 56(3), pp. 366-393.
- Carnoy, M. (1999). *Globalization and Education Reform: What Planners Need to Know*. Paris, UNESCO.
- Carvalho, L. M. (2014). The attraction of mutual surveillance of performance: PISA as a knowledge-policy instrument, in Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: Governing knowledge: Comparison, knowledge-based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education*. London: Routledge, pp. 58-72
- Carvalho, L. M. and E. Costa (2014). Seeing education with one's own eyes and through PISA lenses: considerations of the reception of PISA in European countries, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(4), pp.1-9.
- Chafetz, M. E. (1996). *The tyranny of experts: blowing the whistle on the cult of expertise*. Lanham: Madison Books.
- Chatman, S. (1978). *Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film*. Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Clarke, C. (2012). The value of educational research, *International Journal for Lesson and Learning Studies*, 1(3), pp. 276–288.
- Cobley, P. (2014). *Narrative*. London: Routledge.
- Coffield, F. (2012). Why the McKinsey reports will not improve school systems, *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(1), pp. 131-149.
- Cohen, D. K., & Garet, M. J. (1991). Reforming educational policy with applied social research, in Anderson, D. S., & Biddle, B. J. (Eds.) *Knowledge for policy: improving education through research*. London: The Falmer Press, pp. 123-140.
- Cohn, N. (1957). *The pursuit of the millenium*. Reprint, London: Pimlico, 2004.
- Cooper, B. (1999). *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

- Cowen, R. (1996). Last Past the Post: comparative education, modernity, and perhaps post-modernity, *Comparative Education*, 32(2), pp. 151-170.
- Cowen, B. (2000). Comparing futures, or comparing past? *Comparative Education*, 36(3), pp. 333-342.
- Cowen, R. (2006). Acting comparatively upon the educational world: puzzles and possibilities, *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(5), pp. 561–573.
- Cowen, R. (2014). Ways of knowing, outcomes and 'comparative education': be careful what you pray for, *Comparative Education*, 50(3), pp. 282-301.
- Craib, I. (1992). *Modern social theory: from Parsons to Habermas*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Crossley, M. (2014). Global league tables, BIG data and the international transfer of educational research modalities, *Comparative Education*, 50(1), pp. 15–27.
- Crossley, M., & Watson, K. (2003). *Comparative and international research in education: globalisation, context and difference*. London & New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Crow, D. A., & Berggren, J. (2014). Using narrative policy framework to understand stakeholder strategy and effectiveness: a multi-case analysis, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework in public policy analysis*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, pp. 131-156.
- CSFC (2009). *The children, schools and families committee: national curriculum, fourth report of session 2008-2009, volume I*. London: The Stationary Office.
- Cupitt, D. (1991). *What is a Story?* London: SCM Press.
- Dale, R. (2015). Conjunctions of power and Comparative Education, *Compare*, 45(3): 341-362.
- Demszky, A. and A. Nassehi (2014). The Role of Knowledge in Scientific Policy Advice: Doing Knowledge, in Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: Governing knowledge: Comparison, knowledge-based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education*. London: Routledge, pp. 113-127.
- Dexter, L. A. (2006). *Elite and specialized interviewing*. Wivenhoe Park, England: European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).
- DfE. (2010). *The importance of teaching: the schools white paper*. London: Department for Education.
- DfE. (2011a). "Review of the National Curriculum." Available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum>. (Last accessed: 10.02.2012).
- DfE. (2011b). Remit for review of the National Curriculum in England. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123124929/http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/2014/nationalcurriculum/b0073043/remit-for-review-of-the-national-curriculum-in-england> (Last accessed: 20.02.2016).
- DfE. (2012a). Expert Panel: Terms of Reference. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123124929/http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/2012/expert-panel-terms-of-reference>

- [education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/a0073091/expert-panel-terms-of-reference](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum/a0073091/expert-panel-terms-of-reference) (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- DfE. (2012b). *What can we learn from the English, mathematics and science curricula of high-performing jurisdictions?* London: Department for Education.
- Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (1996). Who learns what from whom: a review of the policy transfer literature, *Political Studies*, 44, pp. 343-357.
- Dolowitz, D. P. and D. Marsh (2000). Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making." *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 13(1), pp. 5-24.
- Dryzek, J. (1993). Policy analysis and planning: from policy analysis to argument, in Fischer, F. & Forester, J. (Eds.) *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. Durham: Duke University press, pp. 213-232.
- Duncan, S. (2009). Policy transfer: theory, rhetoric and reality. *The Policy Press*, 37(3): 453-458.
- Dweyer, P., & Ellison, N. (2009). 'We nicked stuff from all over the place': policy transfer or muddling through? *The Policy Press*, 37(3), pp. 389-407.
- Easterly, W. (2013). *The tyranny of experts*. New York: Basic Books.
- Easton, D. (1953). *The Political System*. New York: Knopf.
- Ebenstein, L. (2015). *Chicagonomics: the evolution of Chicago free market economics*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- The Economist. (1999). Reading, writing and enrichment: private money is pouring into American education – and transforming it. *The Economist*: 55 (16 January 1999). Available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/182475>, (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Edelman, M. (1988). *Constructing the political spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edwards, R., & Nicoll, K. (2001). Researching the rhetoric of lifelong learning, *Journal of Education Policy*, 16(2), pp. 103-112.
- Egan, K. (1988). The analytic and the arbitrary in educational research, *Canadian Journal of Education*, 13(1), pp. 69-82.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (Ed.) (1986). *The origins & diversity of axial civilizations*. Albany: State University Press of New York
- Enders, J. (2010). Political science and education research: windows of opportunity for a neglected relationship, in Jakobi, A. P., Martens, K., & Wolf, K. D. (Eds.) *Education in Political Science: Discovering a Neglected Field*. London: Routledge, pp. 205-217.
- Exley, S., & Ball, S. J. (2011). *Something old, something new... understanding Conservative education policy*, in Bochel, H. (Ed.) *The Conservative Party and Social Policy*. Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 97-118.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). *New Labour, new language*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

- Fairclough, N. (2005). Critical discourse analysis, *Marges Linguistiques*, 9, pp. 76-94.
- Farnsworth, V., & Solomon, Y. (2013). Introduction, in Farnsworth, V., & Solomon, Y. (Eds.) *Reframing Educational Research: Resisting the 'What Works Agenda'*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-6.
- Fay, B. (1975). *Social theory and political practice*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Federici, M. P. (1999). Logophobia: Eric Voegelin on scientism, *The Intercollegiate Review*, 35(1), pp. 14-21.
- Federici, M. P. (2002). *Eric Voegelin: the restoration of order*. Wilmington, Del: ISI Books.
- Feniger, Y., & Lefstein, A. (2014). How not to reason with PISA data: an ironic investigation, *Journal of Education Policy*, 29(6), pp. 845-855.
- Fenwick, T. and R. Edwards (2014). Network alliances: precarious governance through data, standards and code, in Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: Governing knowledge: Comparison, knowledge-based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education*. London: Routledge, pp. 44-57.
- Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) (2014). *World Yearbook of Education 2014. Governing knowledge: comparison, knowledge-based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fischer, F. (1990). *Technocracy and the politics of expertise*. London: Sage Publications.
- Fischer, F. (1993). Policy discourse and the politics of Washington think tanks, in Fischer, F., & Forester, J. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 21-42.
- Fischer, F. (1995). *Evaluating public policy*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall
- Fischer, F. (1998) Beyond empiricism: policy inquiry in postpositivist perspective, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 26(1), pp. 129-146.
- Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing public policy: discursive politics and deliberative practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fischer, F. (2012). *Reframing public policy: discursive politics and deliberative practices* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fischer, F., & Forester, J. (Eds.) (1993). *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Fischer, F., & Gottweis, H. (Eds.) (2012). *The argumentative turn revisited: public policy as communicative practice*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Fitz-Gibbon, C. (2000). Education: realising the potential, in Davies, H. T. O., Nutley, S. M., and Smith, P. C. (Eds.) *What works?: evidence-based policy and practice in public services*. Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 69-92.
- Flew, A. (1975). *Thinking about Thinking*. New York: Harpercollins.
- Forestier, K., & Crossley, M. (2015). International education policy transfer - borrowing both ways: the Hong Kong and England experience, *Compare* 45(5), pp. 664-685.
- Forster, E. M. (1927). *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Edward Arnold.

- Foucault, M. (1988). Confinement, psychiatry, prison, in Kritzman, L. (Ed.) *Politics, philosophy, culture: interviews and other writings, 1977-1984*. New York: Routledge, pp. 178-210.
- Franz, M. (1989). *Sacralizing the secular: the Renaissance origins of modernity*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Franz, M. (1998). Gnosticism and spiritual disorder in the ecumenic age. *The Political Science Reviewer*. 27, pp. 17-42.
- Franz, M. (2005). The concept of Gnosticism and the analysis of spiritual disorder, *Political Science Reviewer*, 34, pp. 28-47.
- Freeman, M. (2004). When the story's over: narrative foreclosure and the possibility of renewal, in Andrews, M., Sclater, S. D., Squire, C., & Treacher, A. (Eds.) *Uses of Narrative*. New Jersey: Transition.
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). *The End of history and the last man*. New York: Free Press.
- Fullan, M. (2009). Large-scale reform comes of age, *Journal of Educational Change*, 10, pp. 101-113
- Gee, J. P. (2005). *Introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*. London: Routledge.
- Germino, D. (1971). *Eric Voegelin's Anamnesis*, *The Southern Review*, 1: 68-88.
- Gibb, N. (2010a). *Nick Gibb to the Politeia Conference*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-to-the-politeia-conference> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2011a). *Nick Gibb to the North of England Conference*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-speech-on-school-improvement> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2011b). *Nick Gibb to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-to-the-specialist-schools-and-academies-trust> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2011c). *Nick Gibb's speech to reform AQA Conference*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibbs-speech-to-reform-aqa-conference> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2012a). *Nick Gibb at the Voice Conference*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-at-the-voice-conference> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2012b). *Nick Gibb to the Grammar School Heads Association*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-to-the-grammar-school-heads-association> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gibb, N. (2014) *Nick Gibb Speaks to Education publishers about Quality Textbooks, Speech given at The Publishers Association and the British Education Suppliers*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-speaks-to-education-publishers-about-quality-textbooks> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Gillham, B. (2000a). *The research interview*. London: Continuum.
- Gillham, B. (2000b). *Case study research methods*. New York: Continuum.

- Goffman, Ervin (1974). *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Goldstein, L. (1993). The Fallacy of the Simple Question, *Analysis*, 53(3), pp.178-181.
- Goldstein, H. (2004). International comparisons of student attainment: some issues arising from the PISA study, *Assessment in Education*, 11(3), pp. 319-330.
- Goodman, P. (1954). *The structure of literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gorard, S. (2001) International comparisons of school effectiveness: the second component of the 'crisis account' in England? *Comparative Education*, 37(3), pp. 279-296.
- Gorard, S. (2010). Serious doubts about school effectiveness, *British Educational Research Journal* 36(5), pp. 745-766.
- Gorur, R. (2011). ANT on the PISA trail: following the statistical pursuit of certainty, *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 43(5-6), pp. 76-93.
- Gorur, R. (2014). Towards a sociology of measurement in education policy, *European Educational Research Journal*, 13 (1), pp. 58-72.
- Gorur, R. (2015). Producing calculable worlds: education at a glance, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(4), pp. 578-595
- Gorur, R., & Wu, M. (2015). Leaning too far? PISA, policy and Australia's 'top five' ambitions, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36 (5), pp. 647-664.
- Gove, M. (2011a). *Michael Gove to the World Education Forum*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/michael-gove-to-the-education-world-forum> (Last accessed: 10.02.2012).
- Gove. (2011b). *National Curriculum Review: children failed by Labour's education reforms, says Gove*. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8269906/National-curriculum-review-children-failed-by-Labours-education-reforms-says-Gove.html> (Last accessed: 10.02.2012).
- Gove, M. (2013). *Oral Statement to Parliament: 2012: OECD PISA results*. Available at: <http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/2012-oecd-pisa-results> (Last accessed: 10.02.2014)
- Gray, J. (2007). *Straw dogs: thoughts on humans and other animals*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Gray, J. (2014). *The silence of animals: on progress and other modern myths*. London: Penguin Books.
- Greene, J. P. (2012). *Best practices are the worst: picking the anecdotes you want to believe*. Available at: <http://educationnext.org/best-practices-are-the-worst/> (Last accessed: 10.02.2014).
- Grek, S. (2008). PISA in the British media: leaning tower or robust testing tool? CES Briefing, 45, April 2008. Available at: <http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/Brief045.pdf> (Last accessed 10.02.2016)
- Grek, S. (2009). Governing by numbers: the PISA 'effect' in Europe, *Journal of Education Policy* 24(1), pp. 23-37.

- Grek, S. (2010). International organisations and the shared construction of policy 'problems': problematisation and change in education governance in Europe, *European Educational Research Journal*, 9(3), pp. 396-406.
- Grek, S. (2012). Learning from meetings and comparison: a critical examination of the policy tools of transnationals, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London, Routledge: 41-61.
- Grek, S. (2013). Expert moves: international comparative testing and the rise of expertocracy, *Journal of Education Policy*, 28 (5), pp. 695–709.
- Grek, S. 2014. OECD as a site of coproduction: European education governance and the new politics of 'policy mobilization', *Critical Policy Studies* 8(6), pp. 266–281.
- Grek, S., & Ozga, J. (2010). Re-inventing public education: the new role of knowledge in education policy-making, *Public Policy and Administration*, 25(3), pp. 271-288.
- Grey, J. (1997). *Endgames: questions in late modern political thought*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Grindle, M. S., & Thomas, J. W. (1991). *Public choices and policy change: the political economy of reform in developing countries*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gupta, K. (2012). Comparative public policy: using the comparative method to advance understanding of the policy process, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), pp. 11-26.
- Haas, P. M. (1992). Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination, *International Organization*, 46(1), pp. 1-35.
- Hajer, M. A. (1993). Discourse coalitions and the institutionalization of practice: the case of acid rain in Britain, in Fischer, F., & Forester, J. (Eds.) *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 43-76.
- Hajer, M. A. (1995). Interpreting policy change: discourse coalitions versus advocacy coalitions, *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*. Chicago.
- Hall, J. (2009). *The global project measuring the progress of societies: a toolkit for practitioners*, Presentation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> OECD World Forum, Busan.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Rugaiya, H. (1985). *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Halloun, I. (2004). *Modeling theory in science education*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Halpin, D., & Troyna, B., (1995). The politics of education policy borrowing, *Comparative Education*, 31(3), pp. 303-310.
- Hamilton, D. (1998). The idols of the market place, in Sless, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (Eds.) *School effectiveness for whom: challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 13-20.

- Hammersley, M. (2002). *Educational research, policymaking and practice*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Hammersley, M. (2007). Educational research and teaching: a reponse to David Hargreaves TTA Lecture, in Hammersley, M. (Ed.) *Educational research and evidence-based Practice*. London: Sage, pp. 18-42.
- Hammersley, M. (2013). *The myth of research-based policy and practice*. London, Sage.
- Hargreaves, A. & M. Fullan (2012). *Professional capital: transforming teaching in every school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (1989). Educational policy and educational change, in Hargreaves, D. & Reynolds, D. (Eds.) *Education policies: controversies and critiques*. London: The Falmer Press, pp. 213-217.
- Hargreaves, D. (1996) *Teaching as a research-based profession: possibilities and prospects, The Teacher Training Agency Annual Lecture 1996*. London: Teacher Training Agency.
- Hargreaves, D. (1997). In defence of research for evidence-based teaching: a rejoinder to Martyn Hammersley, *British Educational Research Journal*, 23, pp. 405-419.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (1989). Educational policy and educational change, in Hargreaves, D., & Reynolds, D. (Eds.) *Education policies: controversies and critiques*. London: The Falmer Press, pp. 213-217.
- Havard, W. C. (1971). The changing pattern of Voegelin's conception of history and consciousness, *The Southern Review*, 7(1), pp. 49-67
- Hayek, F. A. (1944). *The road to serfdom*. London: Routledge.
- Hayek, F. A. (1945). The use of knowledge in society, *The American Economic Review*, 35(4), pp. 519-530.
- Hawkesworth, M. (2012). From policy frames to discursive politics: feminist approaches to development policy and planning in an era of globalization, in Fischer, F., and Gottweis, H. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn revisited: public policy as communicative practice*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 114-148.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1807). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1997).
- Henry, A. D. (2011). Ideology, power and the structure of policy networks, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 39(3), pp. 361-383.
- Henry, M., Lingard, B., Rizvi, F., & Taylor, S. (2001). *The OECD, globalization and education policy*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Herman, D. (2007). Introduction, in Herman, D. (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hill, D. (1990). *Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue: schooling, teacher education and the radical right in Britain and the USA*. London, The Tufnell Press.
- Hopkins D., Harris, A., Stoll, L., & Mackay, T. (2010). *School and system improvement: state of the art review*, Keynote presentation prepared for the 24<sup>th</sup> international Congress of School Effectiveness and School improvement, Limassol, Cyprus, 6<sup>th</sup> January

- Hopkins, D., & Reynolds, D. (2001). The past, present and future of school improvement: towards the Third Age, *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(4), pp. 459-475.
- Hopmann, S. T., & Brinek, G. (2007). Introduction, in Hopmann, G., Brinek, G., & Retzl, M. (Eds.) *PISA according to PISA: does PISA keep what it promises?*. Berlin, LIT Verlag.
- Howarth, D. (2000). *Discourse*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Howarth, D., & Griggs, S. (2012). Poststructural policy analysis: discourse, hegemony, and critical explanation, in Fischer, F., & Gottweis, H. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn revisited: public policy as communicative practice*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hyland, K. (1998). *Hedging in scientific research articles*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hyslop-Margison, E. J., & Naseem, A. (2007). *Scientism and education: empirical research as neo-liberal ideology*. New York: Springer.
- Jakobi, A. P. (2012). Facilitating transfer: international organisations as central nodes for policy diffusion, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 391-407.
- Jakobi, A. P., K. Martens, et al., (Eds.) (2010). *Education in political science: discovering a neglected field*. Oxon, NY: Routledge.
- James, W. (1907). Pragmatism and common sense. *Lecture 5 in pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking*. New York: Longman Green and Co., pp. 63-75.
- Jenkins-Smith, H. C., Norhstedt, D., Weible, C. M., & Sabatier, P. A. (2014). The advocacy coalition framework: foundations, evolution, and ongoing research, in Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, C. M. (Eds.) *Theories of the policy process* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Denver: Westview Press, pp. 183-224.
- Jenkins-Smith, H. C., & Sabatier, P. A. (1994). Evaluating the advocacy coalition framework, *Journal of Public Policy*, 14(2), pp. 175-203.
- Jenkins-Smith, H. C., Silva, C. L., Gupta, K., & Ripeberger, J. T. (2014). Belief system continuity and change in policy advocacy coalitions: using cultural theory to specify belief systems, coalitions, and sources of change, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 42(4), pp. 484-508.
- Jerrim, J. (2011). England's 'Plummeting' PISA test scores between 2000 and 2009: is the performance of Our Secondary School Pupils Really in Relative Decline? *DoQSS Working Paper No. 11-09*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Jerrim, J. (2014). Why do East Asian children perform so well in PISA? An investigation of Western-born children of East Asian descent. *DoQSS working paper 14/16*. Available at: <https://ideas.repec.org/p/qss/dqsswp/1416.html> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)
- Jerrim, J., & Choi, A. (2014). The mathematics skills of school children: how does the UK compare to the high performing East Asian nations? *Journal of Education Policy* 29(3), pp. 349-76.

- Jones, D. S. (2012). *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the birth of neoliberal politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. (2010). A narrative policy framework: clear enough to be wrong?" *Policy Studies Journal* 38(2): 329-353.
- Jones, M. D., McBeth, M. K., & Shanahan, E. A. (2014). Introducing the narrative policy framework, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework in public policy analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-26.
- Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) (2014). *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework in public policy analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Judd, C. and N. Crequer (1993). The Right tightens its grip on education, in Chitty, C., & Simon, B. (Eds.) *Education Answers back: Critical Responses to Government*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 120-125.
- Judt, T. (1998). *The burden of responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French twentieth century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Judt, T. (2010). *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945*. London: Vintage Books.
- Jung, C. G. (1968). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*. New York: Bollingen Foundation (Second edition). Reprinted, Princeton: Bollingen Paperback (1980)
- Kallo, J. (2009). *OECD education policy: a comparative and historical study focusing on the thematic reviews of tertiary education*. Jyvaskyla: Finnish Research Association.
- Kamens, D. H. (2013). Globalization and the emergence of an audit culture: PISA and the search for 'best practices' and magic bullets, in Meyer, H-D., & Benavot, A. (Eds.) *PISA, Power and Policy: the emergence of global educational governance*. Oxford: Syposium Books, pp. 117-14.
- Kamens, D. H. and C. I. McNeely (2010). Globalization and the growth of international educational testing and national assessment, *Comparative Education Review*, 54(1), pp. 5-25.
- Kaplan, J. (1986). The narrative structure of policy analysis, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 5(4), pp. 761-778.
- Kaplan, T. J (1993). Reading policy narratives: beginnings, middles, and ends, in Fischer, F., & Forester, J. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 167-185.
- Kazamias, A. M. (2009). Forgotten men, forgotten themes: the historical-philosophical- cultural and liberal humanist motif in Comparative Education, in Cowen, R., & Kazamias, A. M. (Eds.) *International handbook of comparative education*. London: Springer, pp. 37-58.
- Kelly, A. (2001). *Benchmarking for school improvement: a practical guide for comparing and achieving effectiveness*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Kelly, A. V. (2009). *The curriculum: theory and practice*. London: Sage.

- Keulman, K. (1990). *The balance of consciousness: Eric Voegelin's political theory*. University Park & London: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kim, T. (2014). The intellect, mobility and epistemic positioning in doing comparisons and Comparative Education, *Comparative Education*, 50(1), pp. 58-72.
- King, K (2015). *The global targeting of education and skill: policy history and comparative perspectives*. BAICE Presidential Address, given at the UKFIET 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference: Oxford.
- Kingdon, J. W. (2003). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). New York: Longman.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Klees, S. (2002). World Bank education policy: new rhetoric, old ideology, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22, pp. 451-74.
- Klees, S. J., & Edwards, D. B. J. (2014). Knowledge production and technologies of governance in education, in Fenwick T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: governing knowledge*. London: Routledge, pp. 31-43.
- Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*. London: Allen Lane.
- Knorr Cetina, K. (2007). Culture in global knowledge societies: knowledge cultures and epistemic cultures, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 32(4), pp. 361-375. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/030801807X163571> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)
- Kpess, M. W. (2012). Public policy actors and the knowledge-based social order, in Dizisah, J., & Etkowitz, H. (Eds.) *The age of knowledge: the dynamics of universities, knowledge and society*. Leiden: Koninklijke.
- Kriener, S. and K. B. Christensen (2014). Analyses of model fit and robustness. A new look at the PISA scaling model underlying ranking of countries according to reading literacy, *Psychometrika*, 79(2), pp. 210-231.
- Labov, W. (1997). Some further steps in narrative analysis, *The Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7(1-4), pp. 354-396.
- Labov, W. (2002). *Ordinary events*. Available at: <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/Papers/OE.pdf> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience, in Helm, J. (Ed.) *Essays on verbal and visual arts*. Seattle, Washington University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1972). Structural complexity in fairy tales. *The Study of Man* 1, pp. 128-150.
- Lao, Rattana (2015). *A critical study of Thailand's higher education reforms: the culture of borrowing*. London: Routledge
- Larner, W. (2003). Neoliberalism?, *Environmental and Planning D: Society and Space*, 21(5), pp. 509-512

- Lachapelle, E., Montpetit, E., & Gauvin, J-P. (2014). Public perceptions of expert credibility on policy issues: the role of expert framing and political worldviews, *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(4), pp. 674-697.
- Lauder, H., Jamieson, I., & Wikeley, F. (1998). Models of effective schools: limits and capabilities in Slee, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (Eds.) *School effectiveness for whom: challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 51-69.
- Lauder, H., Young, M., Daniels, H., Balarin, M. & Lowe, J., (Eds.). (2012). *Educating for the knowledge economy? Critical perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lauder, H. (2012). *The global auction: the broken promises of education, jobs, and incomes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lemke, J. L. (1995). *Textual politics: discourse and social dynamics*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Lemke, J. L. & Sabelli, N. H. (2008). Complex systems and educational change: towards a new research agenda, in Mason, M. (Ed.) *Complexity theory and the philosophy of education*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 112-123.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1979). *Myth and meaning*, New York, Schocken Books.
- Levin, B. (1998) An epidemic of education policy: (what) can we learn from each other? *Comparative Education*, 34(2), pp. 131-141
- Leys, C. (1990). Still a question of hegemony, *New Left Review* 181, pp. 119-128.
- Lingard, B. (2015) Think tanks, 'policy experts' and 'ideas for' education policymaking in Australia, *Australian Educational Researcher*, online (Nov 2015)
- Lingard, B., & Rizvi, F. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. New York: Routledge.
- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., & Luke, Allan (1998). School effects in postmodern conditions, in Slee, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (Eds.) *School effectiveness for whom: challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements*. London: Falmer Press, pp. 84-100.
- Lingard, B., & Rawolle, S. (2004). Mediatizing educational policy: the journalistic field, science policy, and cross-field effects, *Journal of Education Policy* 19(3), pp. 361-380.
- Lingard, B., & Rawolle, S. (2010). Globalization and the rescaling of education politics and policy: implications for Comparative Education, in Larsen, M. A. (Ed.) *New thinking in Comparative Education: honoring Robert Cowen*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 33-52.
- Locke, T. (2004). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Luke, A. (2011). Generalizing across borders: policy and the limits of educational science. *Educational Researcher*, 40, pp. 367.
- Maca, M., & Morris, P. (2012). The Philippines, the East Asian 'developmental states' and education: a comparative analysis of why the Philippines failed to develop, *Compare*, 42 (3), pp. 461-484.

- Maclure, S. (1998). Through the revolution and out the other side, *Oxford Review of Education* 24(1), pp. 5-24.
- Mahoney J. (2003). Strategies of causal assessment, comparative historical analysis in the social sciences, in Mahoney, J., & Reuschmeyer, D. (Eds.) *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Majone, G. (1989). *Evidence, argument and persuasion in the policy process*. London, Yale University Press.
- Mandler, J. M. (1984). *Scripts, stories, and scenes: aspects of schema theory*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Markkanen, R., & Schroder, H. (1989). Hedging as a translation problem of scientific texts, in Lauren, C., & Nordman, M. (Eds.) *Special language: from humans thinking to thinking machines*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, pp. 171-179.
- Martens, K. (2007). How to become an influential actor - the 'comparative turn' in OECD education policy, in Rusconi, A., & Lutz, K. (Eds.) *Transformations of the state and global governance*. London: Routledge, pp. 40-56.
- Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Mattheou, D. (2009). The scientific paradigm in Comparative Education: the changing educational context and the quest for a new paradigm in Comparative Education., in Cowen, R., & Kazamias, A. M. (Eds.) *International handbook of Comparative Education*. London: Springer, pp. 59-71.
- May, R. (1991) *The cry for myth*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- May, R. (1994). The origins and significance of the existential movement in psychology, in May, R., Angel, E., & Ellenberger, H. F. (Eds.) *Existence*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., Zald, M. N. (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural feelings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McBeth, M. K., Jones, M. D., & Shanahan, E. A. (2014). The narrative policy framework, in Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, C. M. (Eds.) *Theories of the policy process*. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 225-266.
- McBeth, M. K., & Shanahan, E. A. (2005). Public opinion for sale: the role of policy marketers in Greater Yellowstone policy conflict, *Policy Sciences*, 37, pp. 319-338.
- McBeth, M. K., Shanahan, E. A., Arnell, R. J., & Hathaway, P. L. (2007). The intersection of narrative policy analysis and policy change theory, *Policy Studies Journal*, 35(1), pp. 87-108.
- Mclean, M. (1993). *The promise and peril of education comparison*. London: Tufnell Press.
- McCulloch, G. (2004). *Documentary research in education, history and the social sciences*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- McCulloch, G., & Richardson, W. (2000). *Historical research in educational settings*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- McKnight, S. A. (2005). Eric Voegelin's New Science of Politics: reconsideration after 50 years. *Political Science Reviewer*, 34, pp. 22-28.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education (revised edition.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Meyer, H-D., & Benavot, A. (Eds.). (2013). *PISA, power, and policy: the emergence of global educational governance*. Oxford, Symposium Books.
- Miller, C. (1984). Genre as Social Action, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, pp. 151-167.
- Mintrom, M., & Norman, P. (2009). Policy entrepreneurship and policy change, *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(4), pp. 649-667.
- Morris, P. (1998). Comparative Education and educational reform: beware of prophets returning from the Far East. *Education* 26(2).
- Morris, P. (2012). Pick n' mix, select and project; policy borrowing and the quest for "world class" schooling: an analysis of the 2010 Schools White Paper, *Journal of Education Policy* 27(1), pp. 89-107.
- Morrison, H. (2013). A fundamental conundrum in psychology's standard model of measurement and its consequences for PISA global rankings. Posted: 28.11.2013. Available at: <https://paceni.wordpress.com/tag/oece-pisa/> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016).
- Moss, G., & Goldstein, H. (2014) Epilogue, *Comparative Education* 50(3), pp. 374-377.
- Moutsios, S. (2009). International organisations and transnational education policy, *Compare*, 39(4), pp. 469-481.
- Mumford, L. (1967). *Technics and human development: the myth of the machine (volume 1)*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Publishers Ltd.
- Mumford, L. (1970). *The myth of the machine: the pentagon of power*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Publishers Ltd.
- Myrdal, G. (1956). *Development and under development*, Cairo: National Bank of Egypt.
- Mumby, D. K., & Clair, R. P. (2009). Organizational discourse, in van Dijk, T. A. (Ed.) *Discourse as Social Interaction*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 181-205
- Naugle, D. K. (2002). *Worldview: the history of a concept*. Massachusetts: W. M. B Eerdmans Publishing, Cambridge.
- Ney, S. (2014). The governance of social innovation: connecting meso and macro levels of analysis, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The Science of Stories: Applications of the Narrative Policy Framework*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 207-234.
- Nieli, R. (1987). Eric Voegelin: Gnosticism, mysticism, and modern radical politics, *The Southern Review*, 23(2): 332-348.
- Novoa, A. & Yariv-Mashal, T. (2003). Comparative research: a mode of governance or a historical journey? *Comparative Education*, 39(4): 423-438.
- Nowlin, M. C. (2011). Theories of the policy process: state of research and emerging trends, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 39(1), pp. 41-60.
- Nutley, S. M., Walter, I., & Davies, H. T. O. (2007). *Using evidence: how research can inform public services*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

- Nutley, S., & Webb, J. (2000). Evidence and the policy process, in Davies, H. T. O., Nutley, S. M., & Smith P. C. (Eds.) *What works? Evidence-based policy and practice in public services*. Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 13-42.
- Oakeshott, M. (1962) *Rationalism in politics and other essays*, London: Methuen.
- Oancea, A., & Pring, R. (2009). The importance of being thorough: on systematic accumulations of 'what works' in education research, in Bridges, D., Smeyers, P., & Smith, R. (Eds.) *Evidence-based education policy: what evidence? What basis? Whose Policy?* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 11-35.
- Oates, T. (2010). *Could Do Better: Using International Comparisons to Refine the National Curriculum in England*. Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment.
- Oates, T. (2013). Using International Comparisons to Refine the National Curriculum. *Mayor's Education Conference*. London.
- Oates, T. (2014). *Why textbooks count: a policy paper*. Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment.
- Oates, T. (2015). *Finnish fairy stories*. Cambridge: Cambridge Assessment.
- Ochs, E. (2011). Narrative in everyday life, in van Dijk, T. A. (Ed.) *Discourse studies: a multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 64-84.
- OECD. (2004). *Learning for tomorrow's world: first results from PISA 2003*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2008). *Creating effective learning and teaching environments: first results from TALIS*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2010a) *The High Cost of Low Educational Performance: The Long-Run Impact of Improving PISA outcomes*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2010b) *TALIS 2008 technical report*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2015) *Universal basic skills: what countries stand to gain*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ong, A., & Collier, S. J. (2005). *Global assemblages: technology, politics, and ethics as anthropology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Oxley, D. R., Vedlitz, A., & Wood, B. D. (2014). The effect of persuasive messages on policy problem recognition, *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(2), pp. 252-268.
- Ozga, J. (2009). Governing education through data in England: from regulation to self-evaluation, *Journal of Education Policy*, 24 (2), pp. 149–162.
- Ozga, J., & Jones, R. (2006). Travelling and embedded policy: the case of knowledge transfer, *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(1), pp. 1-19.
- Ozga, J., & Lingard, B. (2007). Globalisation, education policy and politics, in Ozga, J., & Lingard, B. (Eds.) *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Education policy and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Ozga, J. (2014). Knowledge, inspection and the work of governing, *SISYPHUS: Journal of Education*, 2(1), pp. 16-38.
- Ozga, J. & Barber, M. (2014). Data work: Michael Barber in conversation with Jenny Ozga, in Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: Governing knowledge: Comparison, knowledge-*

- based technologies and expertise in the regulation of education*. London: Routledge, pp. 75-86.
- Papadopoulos, G. (1994). *Education 1960-1990: the OECD perspective*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Pearson. (2012). Annual report and accounts 2012. Pearson. Available at: [http://www.pearson.com/content/dam/pearsoncorporate/files/cosec/2013/15939\\_PearsonAR12.pdf](http://www.pearson.com/content/dam/pearsoncorporate/files/cosec/2013/15939_PearsonAR12.pdf). (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)
- Peck, J. (2010). *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Perelman, C., & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The new rhetoric: a treatise on argumentation*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Phillips, D., & Ochs, K. (2003). Processes of policy borrowing in education: some explanatory and analytical devices, *Comparative Education* 39(4), pp. 451-461.
- Phillips, D. C. N., & Burbules, C. (2000). *Postpositivism and educational research*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Phillips, P. (2012). Governing innovation in a knowledge society, in Dzisah, J., & Etzkowitz, H. (Eds.) *The Age of Knowledge: the dynamics of universities, knowledge and society*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 167-191.
- Plett, H. F. (1985) Rhetoric, in van Dijk, T. A. (Ed.) *Discourse and literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin's Publishing Company.
- Pongratz, L. A. (2006). Voluntary self-control: education reform as a governmental strategy, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 38 (4), pp. 471–482.
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: Sage.
- Raffe, D. (1998). Does learning begin at home? The use of 'home international' comparisons in UK policymaking, *Journal of Education Policy*, 13(5), pp. 591-602.
- Ramalingam, B. (2013). *AID on the edge of chaos: rethinking international cooperation in a complex world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rapleye, J. (2010). Different presumptions about progress, divergent prescriptions for peace: connections between conflict, development and education in Nepal, in Paulson, J. (Ed.) *Education, Conflict and Development*. Oxford, Symposium, pp. 59-100.
- Rapleye, J. (2012). *Educational policy transfer in an era of globalization: theory - history - comparison*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Rapleye, J. (2012). Reimagining attraction and 'borrowing' in education: introducing a political production model, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 121-147.
- Rapleye, J. (2015) Revisiting the metaphor of the island: challenging 'World Culture' from an island misunderstood, *Globalisation, Education, and Societies*, 13(1), pp. 58-87
- Rautalin, M., & Alasuutari, P. (2009). The uses of the national PISA results by Finnish officials, *Journal of Education Policy* 24(5), pp. 539-556.

- Rein, M., & Schon, D. (1993). Reframing policy discourse. In Fischer, F., & Forester, J. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp.145-166.
- Rein, M., & Schon, D. (1994). *Frame reflection: towards the resolution of intractable policy controversies*. New York: Basic Books.
- Reissman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. London: Sage.
- Reynolds, D. (2005). "World class" school improvement: an analysis of the implications of recent international school effectiveness and school improvement research for improvement practice, in Hopkins, D. (Ed.) *The practice and theory of school improvement*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 241-251.
- Reynolds, D., & Farrell, S. (1996). *Worlds apart: a review of international surveys of Educational Achievement involving England*. London: Office For Standards In Education.
- Ricoeur, P. (1981) *Time and narrative (Volume 1)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984) *Time and Narrative (Volume 2)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rizvi, F. (2007). Towards a view of policy analysis as practical reason, in S. J. Ball, Goodson, I. F., & Maguire, M. (Eds.) *Education, Globalisation and New Times*. London: Routledge, pp. 205-221.
- Robertson, S. L. (2011). *The strange non-death of neoliberal privatisation in the World Bank's education strategy 2020*. Bristol: Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies, University of Bristol.
- Robertson, S. L., & Dale, R. (2003). "Designed" dialogues: the real politics of evidence-based practice and education policy research in England, in Ginsburg, M. B., & Gorostiaga, J. M. (Eds.) *Limitations and Possibilities of Dialogue among Researchers, Policy Makers, and Practitioners: International Perspectives of the Education Field*. New York: Routledge Falmer, pp. 219-236.
- Robertson, S. J. and Dale, R. (2015). Comparing policies in a globalising world: methodological reflections, in Hadjar, A., & Gross, C. (Eds.) *Education systems and inequalities*. Bristol: Policy Press. Available at: <https://susanleerobertson.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/robertson-and-dale-2015-glob-policy-comparison.pdf> (Last accessed: 10.02.2016)
- Robertson, S. L., Mundy, K., Verger, A., & Menashy, F. (Eds.) (2012). *Public private partnerships in education: new actors and modes of governance in a globalizing world*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Robertson, S. L. & Verger, A. (2012). Governing through public private partnerships, in Robertson, S. L., Mundy, K., Verger, A., & Menashy, F. (Eds.) *Public private partnerships in education: new actors and modes of governance in a globalizing world*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 21-42.
- Robinson, J. A., & Hawpe. L. (1986). Narrative thinking as a heuristic process, in Sarbin, T. R. (Ed.) *Narrative psychology: the storied nature of human conduct*. London: Praeger, pp. 111-128.

- Roe, E. (1994). *Narrative policy analysis: theory and practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rose, N. (1991). Governing by numbers: figuring out democracy, *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 16, pp. 673–692.
- Rosenau, J. (2004). Many globalizations, one international relations, *Globalizations* 1(1), pp. 7-14.
- Rosenau, J. & Czempiel, E-O. (Eds.) (1992) *Governance without government: order and change in world politics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Roszbach, S. (2005). “Gnosis” in Eric Voegelin’s philosophy, *Political Science Reviewer*, 34, pp. 77-121.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1975). Notes on a schema for stories, in Bobrow, D. G., & Collins, A. (Eds.) *Representation in Understanding: Studies in Cognitive Science*. New York: Mimeo, pp. 211-237.
- Rutkowski, D. (2015), The OECD and the local: PISA-based test for schools in the USA, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(5), pp. 683-699.
- Sabatier, P. A. (1988). An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-oriented learning therein, *Policy Sciences* 21, pp. 129-168.
- Sabatier, P. A. (1998). The advocacy coalition framework: revisions and relevance for Europe, *Journal of European Public Policy* 5(1), pp. 98-130.
- Sabatier, P. A. (2000). Clear enough to be wrong, *Journal of European Public Policy* 7(1), pp. 135-140.
- Sabatier, P. A., & Jenkins-Smith, H. C. (1993). The advocacy coalition framework: assessment, revisions, and implications for scholars and practitioners, in Sabatier, P. A., & Jenkins-Smith, H. C. (Eds.), *Policy change and learning: an advocacy coalition approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 211-236.
- Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, M. (2007). The advocacy coalition framework: Innovations and clarifications. In Sabatier, P. A. (Ed.) *Theories of the policy process*. Colorado. Westview Press, pp. 65-92.
- Sabatier, P. A., & Weible, C. M. (Eds.) (2014). *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press.
- Sadler, M. (1900). How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education?’ Address given at the Guildford Educational Conference on Saturday 20 October 1900, in Higginson, J. (Ed.) *Selections from Michael Sadler: studies in world citizenship*. (1979). Liverpool: DeJall & Meyorre.
- Sammons, P. (2008). Zero tolerance of failure and New Labour approaches to school improvement in England, *Oxford Review of Education* 34(6), pp. 651-664.
- Samuel, R., & Thompson, P. (1990) *The myths we live by*. London: Routledge.
- Sandoz, E. (1971). The foundations of Voegelin’s political theory, *The Political Science Reviewer*, 31(1), pp. 30-73.
- Savage, G. C. (2015). Think tanks, education and elite policy actors, *Australian Educational Researcher*, doi: 10.1007/s13384-015-0185-0

- Scholes, R., Phelan, J., & Kellogg, R. (1966). *The nature of narrative*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. (Fortieth Anniversary Edition, revised and expanded, 2006).
- Schopenhauer, A. (1969). *The world as will and representation*. New York: Dover Publications Inc.
- Schultz, T. (1963). *The economic value of education*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing like a state: How some schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press.
- Shaker, P. C. Ruitenberg (2007). 'Scientifically-based research': the art of politics and the distortion of science, *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 30(2), 207-219
- Schlager, E., & Weible, C. M. (2013). New theories of the policy process, *Policy Studies Journal* 41(3), pp. 389-396.
- Schmidt, V. A. (2012). Discursive institutionalism: scope, dynamics, and philosophical underpinnings, in Fischer, F., & Gottweis, H. (Eds.) *The argumentative turn revisited: public policy as communicative practice*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 85-113.
- Schmidt, W. & Prawat, R. 2006 Curriculum coherence and national control of education: issue or non-issue? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38(6), pp. 641-658
- Schon, D. A. (1979). Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy, in Ortony, A. (Ed.) *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 254-283
- Schriewer, J. (2000). World system and interrelationship networks: the internationalization of education and the role of comparative inquiry, in Popkewitz, T. S. (Ed.) *Educational Knowledge*, Albany, pp. 305 - 343.
- Schriewer, J., & Martinez, C. (2004) Constructions of internationality in education, in Steiner-Khamsi, G. (Ed.) *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 29–53
- Sebba, J. (2004). Developing an evidence-based approach to policy and practice in education, in Thomas, G., & Pring, R. (Eds.) *Evidence based practice in education*, OUP/McGraw-Hill.
- Sellar, S., & Lingard, B. (2013). PISA and the expanding role of the OECD in global educational governance, in Meyer, H-D., & Benavot, A. (Eds.) *PISA, Power and Policy: the emergence of global educational governance*. Oxford: Symposium Books, pp. 185-206.
- Shaker, P., & Ruitenberg, C. (2007). 'Scientifically-based research': the art of politics and th distortion of science, *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 30(2), pp. 207-219.
- Shanahan, E. A., Adams, S. M., Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. (2014). The blame game: narrative persuasiveness of the intentional causal mechanism, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework*. New York: Palgrave Macmilan, pp. 69-88.
- Shanahan, E. A., Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. (2011). Policy narratives and policy processes, *Policy Studies Journal* 39(3), pp. 535-561.

- Shanahan, E. A., McBeth, M. K., Arnell, R. J., & Hathaway, P. L. (2008). Conduit or contributor? The role of media in policy change theory, *Policy Sciences*, 41(2), pp. 115-38.
- Shanahan, E. A., McBeth, M. K., & Jones, M. D. (2014) Denouement, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework in public policy analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 247-260.
- Silova, I. (2012). Contested meanings of educational borrowing, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 229-245.
- Silova, I., & Brehm, W. (2015). From myths to models: the reproduction of World Culture in Comparative Education, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 13(1), pp. 8-33
- Singer, T. (Ed.). (2013). *The vision thing: myth, politics and psyche in the world*, London: Routledge.
- Simons, M. (2015). Governing education without reform: the power of the example, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(5), pp. 712-731.
- Slee, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (1998). Introduction: school effectiveness for whom?, in Slee, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (Eds.) *School effectiveness for whom? Challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements*. London: Falmer Press.
- Slee, R., Weiner, G., & Tomlinson, S. (1998). *School effectiveness for whom? Challenges to the school effectiveness and school improvement movements*. London: Falmer Press.
- Smedsland, J. (1979) Between the analytic and the arbitrary: a case study of psychology research, *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 20, pp. 129-140
- Smeyers, P. (2009). On the epistemological basis of large-scale population studies and their education use, in Bridges, D., Smeyers, P., & Smith, R. (Eds.) *Evidence-based policy: What evidence? What basis? Whose policy?* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 58-81.
- Smith, G. & Exely, S. (2006). The influence of overseas examples on DES policy-making for the school system in England 1985-1995, *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(5), pp. 575-597.
- Sobe, N. W. & Kowalczyk, J. (2013). Exploding the cube: revisioning 'context' in the field of Comparative Education, *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 6 17(1), pp. 6-12
- Sorell, T. (1991). *Scientism: philosophy and the infatuation with science*. London: Routledge.
- Spreen, C. A., & Stark, L. (2014). Privatization nation: how the United States became the land of "edupreneurs", in *Privatization of Schools: Selling out the right to quality public education for all*, Summer, pp. 127-138
- Squire, C. (2008). *Approaches to narrative research*. London: ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper, ESRC.

- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2004). Blazing a trail for policy, theory, and practice, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Popkewitz, T. S. (Eds.) *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 201-220.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Stolpe, I. (2006). *Educational import: local encounters with global forces in Mongolia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2012). Understanding policy borrowing and lending: building comparative policy studies, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy borrowing and lending in education*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-17.
- Stone, D. (2000). Non-governmental policy transfer: the strategies of independent policy institutes, *Governance*, 13(1), pp. 45-70.
- Stone, D. (2004). Transfer agents and global networks in the 'transnationalization' of policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11(3): 545-566.
- Stone, D. A. (1988). *Policy paradox and political reason*. USA: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Stone, D. A. (1989). Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas, *Political Science Quarterly*, 104(2), pp. 281-300.
- Stone, D. A. (2012). *The art of political decision making*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Stronach, I. (2010). *Globalizing education, educating the local*. Oxon and NY: Routledge.
- Sung, Y.-K. (2011). Cultivating borrowed futures: the politics of neoliberal loanwords in South Korean cross-national policy borrowing, *Comparative Education*, 47(4), pp. 523-528.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taht, K., & Must, O. (2013). Comparability of educational achievement and learning attitudes across nations, *Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice*, 19 (1), pp.19-38.
- Takayama, K. (2010). Politics of externalization in reflexive times: reinventing Japanese education reform discourses through 'Finnish success'." *Comparative Education Review*, 54, pp. 51–75.
- Takayama, K. (2012). Bringing a Political 'Bite' to Educational Transfer Studies: Cultural Politics of PISA and the OECD in Japanese Education Reform, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. New York: Routledge, pp. 148–166
- Tamney, J. B. (1995). *The struggle over Singapore's soul: Western modernization and Asian culture*. New York: De Gruyter.
- Tao, S. R. (2013). Why are teachers absent? Utilising the capability approach and critical realism to explain teacher performance in Tanzania, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(1), pp. 2–14
- Tardy, C. M. (2011). Genre Analysis, in Hyland, K., & Paltridge, B. (Eds.) *The continuum companion to discourse analysis*. London: Continuum, pp. 54-68.

- Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Thomas, S. M., Salim, M., Munoz-Chereau, B., & Peng, W-J. (2012). Educational quality, effectiveness and evaluation: Perspectives from China, South America and Africa, in Chapman, C., Armstrong, P., Hariss, A., Reynolds, D., & Sammons, P. (Eds.) *School effectiveness and improvement research, policy and practice*. London, Routledge, pp. 125-145.
- Tikly, L. (2015). What works, for whom, and in what circumstances? Towards a critical realist understanding of learning in international and comparative education, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, pp. 237-249.
- Todorov, T. (1990). *Genres in discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, J. (2006) Globalization and cultural analysis, in Held, D., & McGrew, A. (Eds.) *Globalization theory: approaches and controversies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 148-168.
- Trohler, D. (2015). The medicalization of current educational research and its effects on education policy and school reforms, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36 (5), pp. 749-764.
- Tucker, M. (Ed.) (2011). *Surpassing Shanghai: an agenda for American education built on the World's leading systems*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Upton, T. A., & Cohen, M. A. (2009). An approach to corpus-based discourse analysis: the move analysis as example. *Discourse Studies* 11(5), pp. 585-605.
- Valverde, G. A. (2014). Educational quality: global politics, comparative enquiry, and opportunities to learn, *Comparative Education Review* 58(4), pp. 575-589.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1976). Narrative macro-structures: logical and cognitive foundations, *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1, pp. 547-568.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1980). Story comprehension: an introduction, *Poetics* 9, pp. 1-21.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Aims of critical discourse analysis, *Japanese Discourse* 1, pp. 17-27.
- Van Dijk, T. (2004). Discourse, knowledge and ideology: reformulating old questions and proposing some new solutions, in Putz, M., Neff-van Aertslaer, J., & van Dijk, T. A. (Eds.) *Communicating ideologies: multidisciplinary perspectives on language, discourse, and social practice*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang - Europaischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, pp. 5-38.
- Van Dijk, T. (2009). Discourse as interaction in society, in van Dijk, T. A. (Ed.) *Discourse as social interaction*. London, Sage, pp. 1-37.
- Van Leeuwen, T., & Wodak, R. (1999). Legitimizing immigration and control: a discourse-historical analysis, *Discourse Studies* 1(1), pp. 83-118.

- Van Nus, M. (1999). 'Can we count on your bookings of potatoes to madeira?' Corporate context and discourse practices in direct sales letters, in Bargiela-Chiappini, F. & Nickerson, C (Eds.) *Writing business: genres, media and discourses*. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., pp. 181-205.
- Verger, A., & Curran, M. (2014). New public management as a global education policy: its adoption and re-contextualization in a Southern European setting. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(3): 253-271
- Voegelin, E. (1952). *The new science of politics: An Introduction*
- Voegelin, E. (1956). *Order and history, Vol. I: Israel and revelation*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press.
- Voegelin, E. (1957). *Order and history, Volume II: The world of the polis*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia.
- Voegelin, E. (1968). *Science, politics & gnosticism*. Washington DC: Henry Regenry Company. Reprint, Delaware, ISI Books (2009)
- Voegelin, E. (1974). *Order and history, Vol. IV: The ecumenic age*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia
- Voegelin, E. (1978). *Anamnesis*, Translated and Edited by Gerhart Niemeyer, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press.
- Voegelin, E. (1997). *History of political ideas, vol. I: Hellenism, Rome, and early Christianity*, edited with an introduction by Athanasios Moulakis, Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press.
- Waldow, F. (2009). Undeclared imports: silent borrowing in educational policy-making and research in Sweden, *Comparative Education* 45(4), pp. 477-494
- Waldow, F. (2012). Standardisation and legitimacy: two central concepts in research on borrowing and lending, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 411-427.
- Walford, G. (1994). A new focus on the powerful, in Walford, G. (Ed.) *Researching the powerful in education*. London, England: UCL Press, 2-13.
- Walker, M. (1963). *The nature of scientific thought*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Watson, D. (2013). *Methods of argumentation*. Cambridge University Press: New York
- Webb, E. (2005). Voegelin's Gnosticism reconsidered, *Political Science Reviewer*, 34, pp. 48-77.
- Weible, C. M., Sabatier, P. A., & McQueen, K. (2009). Themes and variations: taking stock of the advocacy coalition framework, *Policy Studies Journal* 37(1), pp. 121-140.
- Weible, C. M., Sabatier, P. A., Jenkins-Smith, H. C., Nohrstedt, D., Henry, A. D., & deLeon, P. (2011). A quarter century of the advocacy coalition framework: an introduction to the special issue, *Policy Studies Journal* 39(3), pp. 349-360.
- Weible, C. M., & Schlager, E. (2014). Contributions, limitations, and recommendations, in Jones, M. D., Shanahan, E. A., & McBeth, M. K. (Eds.) *The science of stories: applications of the narrative policy framework*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 235-246.

- Weinberg, A. M. (1974). Science and Trans-Science, *Minerva* 10(2), pp. 209-222.
- Weiss, T. G., & Ozgercin, K. V. (2009). The evolution of global governance: theory and practice, in Wiener, R. & Schrire, R. A. (Eds.) *International relations (Volume 2)*. Paris: developed under the auspices of the UNESCO, Eolss Publishers, pp. 137-155
- Whitty, G. (1997). Social theory and education policy: the legacy of Karl Manneheim. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 18(2), pp. 149-163.
- Whitty, G. (2006). Education(al) research and education policy making: is conflict inevitable? *British Educational Research Journal* 32(2): 159-176.
- Wendel, P. J. (2008). "Models and paradigms in Kuhn and Halloun, *Science and Education* 17, pp. 131-141.
- Wetfeet (2009). *McKinsey & Company*. Philadelphia: Wetfeet.
- Whitty, G. (2012). Policy tourism and policy borrowing in education: A trans-Atlantic case study, in Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (Eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*. London: Routledge, pp. 334-370.
- Whitty, G. and T. Edwards (1998). "School Choice Policies in England and the US: an exploration of their origins and significance." *Comparative Education* 34(2): 211-227.
- Wilby, P. (2014) . Global school tests under attack as OECD accused of killing 'joy of learning'. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/may/06/oecd-pisa-tests-education-joy-of-learning> (Last accessed: 10.02.2015).
- Williamson, J. (1989) What Washington means by policy reform, in Williamson J. (Ed.) *Latin American readjustment: how much has happened*. Washington: Institute for International Economics
- Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about - a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments, in Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.) *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 1-13.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory and methodology. in Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.) *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 1-33.
- Wolf, A. (2004) Education and economic performance: simplistic theories and their economic consequences, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 20(2), pp.315-333.
- Woodward. R. (2009). *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD). London and New York: Routledge.
- Woolgar, S. (1991). Beyond the citation debate: towards a sociology of measurement technologies and their use in science policy, *Science and Public Policy*, 18 (5), pp. 319-326.
- Yin, R. K. (1989). The case study as a serious research strategy, *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilisation* 3, pp. 97-114.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Applications of case study research*. London, Sage.
- You, Y. & Paul Morris (2015). Imagining school autonomy in high-performing education systems: East Asia as a source of policy referencing in

England, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*,  
DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2015.1080115

Zundel, A. (1995). Policy frames and ethical traditions: the case of  
homeownership for the poor, *Policy Studies Journal* 23(3), pp. 423-434.