Imagining school autonomy in high-performing education systems: East Asia as a source of policy referencing in England

Yun You & Paul Morris

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Imagining school autonomy in high-performing education systems: East Asia as a source of policy referencing in England

Yun You* and Paul Morris

Institution of Education, University College London, London, UK

Education reform is increasingly based on emulating the features of 'world-class' systems that top international attainment surveys and, in England specifically, East Asia is referenced as the 'inspiration' for their education reforms. However, the extent to which the features identified by the UK Government accord with the situation within East Asia is problematic. This paper examines the relationship between the English representation and the 'reality' of East Asian education systems, using school autonomy as an illustrative example. We focus on Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai, which are cited extensively to legitimate policies providing greater autonomy for schools in England. We argue firstly that the English representation has been largely discursive and inaccurate; has failed to recognise the variations across the region; and has been selected to endorse the Government's ideological preferences. Secondly, the scope, form and nature of school autonomy vary markedly, and are operationalised in each society in ways reflecting the prevailing sociopolitical priorities.

Keywords: school autonomy; East Asia; England; policy borrowing/referencing

Introduction

Visitors to England from China were surprised by the former Education Secretary's statement: 'I'd like us to implement a cultural revolution just like the one they've had in China' (Gove 2010). The surprise was twofold: (1) his admiration for the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' and (2) his enthusiasm for learning from East Asian education systems. Historically, the flow has been in the opposite direction: East Asia has a long record of seeking to imitate 'advanced' Western models and this trend has continued to date. For example, as part of the Meiji Restoration, a Japanese Government delegation toured the USA and Europe to study modern education systems and, more recently, as Forestier and Crossley (2014, 8) note, the UK has become 'a significant source of expertise' for the post-1997 Hong Kong reforms.

*Corresponding author. Email: yun.you.14@ucl.ac.uk

The reverse of this trend has emerged not just in England but also in other Western countries, such as the USA and Australia (Waldow, Takayama, and Sung 2014). Sellar and Lingard (2013) argue that, in addition to Finland, East Asia has become the new 'poster boy' in the global discourse of education policy borrowing. Countries and cities in the region, especially Singapore, South Korea, Shanghai and Hong Kong, have been promoted as models of a 'world-class' system by a network of academics, think tanks, consultancies and international organisations, such as McKinsey and Pearson (Auld and Morris 2014). The resulting call to look 'East' has been largely based on an assumed connection between East Asia's dramatic economic growth and its educational 'success', as measured by international surveys of pupil achievement, particularly the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Morris 2015).

Proponents of World Culture (e.g. Meyer et al. 1997) have argued that the resulting patterns of policy borrowing, which have occurred as nations seek to emulate the features of 'world-class' systems, has facilitated the convergence of education systems to an essentially 'western model'. However, many scholars (e.g. Schriewer 1990; Steiner-Khamsi 2012), drawing on Luhmann's 'system theory' and its core concept, 'externalisation', have demonstrated that external influences do not necessarily lead to changes to the home system. As Schriewer and Martinez (2004, 32) elaborate, the home system inherently and freely filters and selects a limited amount of information from the international environment and 'rearranges' it depending on the home system's 'internal needs for "supplementary meaning"'. In this way, the home system maintains and reinforces its long-standing identity and distinctiveness (Rappleye 2012). Luhmann (1981, 40) argues that 'system-internal interpretative acts … do not provide reliable information on … what is actually going on in the world.'

From the perspective of 'externalisation', three interconnected considerations are pertinent in understanding policy borrowing as a specific form of evidence-based policy-making. Firstly, as Steiner-Khamsi (2014, 156) argues, policy borrowing has never been 'wholesale'; rather, it has reflected 'the 'socio-logic' or context-specific reasons for receptiveness' as policy actors search for international evidence that is most compatible with their desired policy actions. Secondly, as Morris (2012) demonstrates, the international evidence harnessed to promote domestic reforms has often been selected, and misinterpreted, to legitimate specific ideological agendas. Thirdly, Rappleye (2012, 125) uses the metaphor of 'political theatre': policy attraction and 'borrowing' serve as a form of 'political stagecraft' in which political players write their own 'script' on the basis of 'pre-existing ideological convictions', then perform the 'drama' of 'borrowing', attempting to 'erase' its 'political origins' and 'produce salutary effects amongst the audience ….' Waldow (2012, 419) similarly notes that the value lies in

the images or pictures that are portrayed and whether or not they actually portray anything 'real' is 'beside the point'.

Taylor (2004) defines such images as a 'social imaginary' that generates legitimacy for social practices by reflecting the views of social reality (how things usually go) and norms (how things ought to go) shared by ordinary people. Rizvi (2006, 198) also emphasises the importance for governments to develop and exercise 'a social imaginary within which policy practices are located'. Takayama (2010) argues that, rather than pursuing the 'reality' of reference societies, policy actors are more interested in using their images to mobilise the public's feelings of anxiety, fear, despair and hope in an attempt to promote their favoured education reforms.

England's PISA ranking, and by association its educational standards, have been portrayed domestically as dramatically falling since 2003, especially in contrast to top-performing East Asian societies (DfE 2010). This portrayal has been reinforced by headlines such as 'China's Poorest Beat Our Best Pupils' (*The Telegraph*, February 17, 2014) and 'English Pupils "Two Years Behind" Asian Peers in Maths' (*The Independent*, February 22, 2013). In the 2010 Schools White Paper (SWP), the Government claimed that 'the only way we can catch up, and have the world-class schools our children deserve, is by learning the lessons of other countries' success' (DfE 2010, 3). East Asia has become the main source of policy borrowing in England.

However, the Government's identification, description and interpretation of the features of schooling in East Asia have not been subjected to critical scrutiny and there has been a tendency to portray the education systems of East Asia as a homogeneous and undifferentiated entity. Using school autonomy as an example, this paper investigates whether the Government's representation of education systems in East Asia accords with the 'reality' as perceived within the domestic context. As PISA is undertaken by 15-year-old pupils, this paper focuses on the main types of secondary schools in Hong Kong (aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme [DSS] schools); Singapore (government and aided schools, including autonomous schools, and independent schools); and Shanghai (government and government-sponsored people-run schools) and compare these to the main types of secondary schools in England (academies and free schools).

The English representation is examined by analysing official documents including policy papers, announcements and speeches, and reports (e.g. OECD and McKinsey), which were referenced to provide the evidence for the promotion of school autonomy, especially with regard to East Asia. We are concerned with what the images of school autonomy in East Asia are, how the UK Government has discursively constructed them and how they have impacted on policy-making in England. The investigation of the 'reality' draws on a triangulated analysis of three sources of data: (1) policy documents that define the autonomy of schools; (2) secondary literature that

has interpreted it; and (3) semi-structured interviews with 19 secondary school principals, who were selected because, apart from being responsible for their schools, they were also active in one or more of the various policy advisory and/or principal representative bodies that are part of the broader policy community, as well as 12 scholars, journalists and policymakers, who are specialists in, and have commented publicly on aspects of school governance in the three East Asian societies. Together, these three sources of data combined to provide a portrayal of both the nature of official intentions and how it was interpreted and operationalised within schools. This ensured our evidence was not solely reliant on statements of policy intent.

We argue firstly that the English representation has been largely discursive and inaccurate; has failed to recognise the variations across the region; and has been used to endorse the Government's policy preferences. In this paper, 'policy borrowing', as the most commonly used term in the literature, is retained to discuss that literature. However, in discussing the gap between the representation and the 'reality', the term 'policy referencing' is more appropriate than 'policy borrowing' – 'referencing' avoids suggesting that policy actions are directly transferred from one country to another. In the following sections, we first demonstrate how the Government has imagined and constructed school autonomy in East Asia and then we explore how school autonomy is operationalised and is perceived within each of the three East Asian societies.

The English representation

In the SWP, the top performers in PISA 'from Alberta to Singapore, Finland to Hong Kong, Harlem to South Korea' were described as the 'inspiration' for education reforms in England (DfE 2010, 7). After examining their common features, three key lessons were identified:

> 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. (DfE 2010, 5)

This suggested that East Asia, which includes many of 'the most successful countries', enjoys high levels of school autonomy and that this has contributed to its educational 'success'. However, in the SWP, there was little direct reference to specific East Asian exemplars to support the claims about school autonomy. South Korea was mentioned once:

> Finland and South Korea – the highest performing countries in PISA – have clearly defined and challenging universal standards, along with individual school autonomy. (DfE 2010, 4)

Singapore and South Korea were, however, cited four times to highlight the weakness of England's education system and to support the need for high quality teachers. Despite their low PISA rankings, charter schools in the USA, free schools in Sweden and city technology colleges and academies in England were frequently cited to support the assertion that 'in many of the highest-performing jurisdictions, school autonomy is central' (DfE 2010, 51). Furthermore, little attempt was made to clarify the precise scope, form and nature of school autonomy in the systems referenced, which left ample space for the Government to cite evidence relating to this generic concept.

A series of policy initiatives were subsequently proposed in the SWP to increase autonomy in English schools. These included: (1) removing unnecessary central prescription about curriculum and qualifications, (2) increasing autonomy for all schools, (3) dramatically extending the academy programme by getting existing schools to convert to Academy status and (4) supporting teachers, parents, charities and enterprises to set up new free schools. Further, academies and free schools (public-funded and free from the control of local authorities) were given more power to establish their own mission and 'ethos', design their curriculum, raise standards, determine teachers' salaries, extend school hours and recruit untrained/unqualified teachers.

More recently, the importance and necessity of school autonomy has been reiterated in numerous official announcements and speeches (e.g. Gove 2014; Truss 2013) and East Asian societies have been increasingly referenced. For example:

> In Singapore, often cited as an exemplar of centralism, the Government has deliberately encouraged greater diversity in the school system – and dramatic leaps in attainment have been secured as a result. Schools where principals are exercising a progressively greater degree of operational autonomy are soaring ahead. And as the scope for innovation has grown, so Singapore's competitive advantage over other nations has grown too. (Gove 2011)

Winstanley, Sorabji and Dawson's (1995) distinction between 'criteria power' and 'operational power' is pertinent; the former refers to the power to define the aims, purpose and framework of service provision, and the latter means the power to decide how service is delivered. As we will see below, the power given to selected schools in East Asia focuses on 'operational power'.

Later, in responding to England's 'stagnancy' in the PISA 2012 result, Gove (2013) reaffirmed the lessons that England should draw from high-performing and fast-improving systems. With regard to school autonomy, he stated:

> There is a strong correlation in these league tables between freedom for heads – in systems like Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong – and improved

results. That is why we have dramatically increased the number of academies and free schools – and given heads more control over teacher training, continuous professional development and the improvement of underperforming schools. The School Direct programme – by giving heads control of teacher recruitment – has improved the quality of new teachers.

The Schools Minister, Nick Gibb (2014), more recently claimed that the 'academisation' (conversion to academy status) of schools in England since 2010 had significantly improved the performance of schools and he specifically applauded the granting of 'real' autonomy to schools to 'vary their curriculum, extend the length of their school day and employ the best teachers – regardless of whether they have received formal qualified teacher status' . In parallel, the Government has sought to create a more demanding and rigorous national curriculum and has similarly relied heavily on evidence from East Asia. However, neither academies nor free schools are required to follow the National Curriculum.

The Government's effort to demonstrate the importance of school autonomy has also drawn on the work of the OECD. For example:

> In its most recent international survey of education, the OECD found that 'in countries where schools have greater autonomy over what is taught and how pupils are assessed, pupils tend to perform better'. (Gove 2011)

However, the evidence drawn from the OECD has sometimes been used selectively. For example, the OECD (2010) was cited as the source for the following assertion in the SWP:

> Across the world, the case for the benefits of school autonomy has been established beyond doubt …. Analysis of PISA data shows that the features of the strongest education systems combine autonomy (e.g. over staffing powers at school level) with accountability (e.g. systematic and external pupil-level assessments). (DfE 2010, 51)

Morris (2012) notes that, although the OECD stated that a growing number of countries have established more autonomous schools, it did not make any claims about their impact on pupil achievement. In its report, the OECD (2013, 4) was specific that 'school systems with high overall levels of performance tend to grant more autonomy to schools in designing curricula and assessments and seek feedback from pupils for quality-assurance and improvement'. However, according to the results of the school context questionnaire conducted along with the PISA 2012, schools in England are reported to enjoy greater autonomy than their East Asian counterparts in almost all surveyed aspects, such as appointing teachers, setting teachers' salaries, formulating school budgets, choosing textbooks, determining subjects and establishing assessment policies (OECD 2013).

In contrast, the 2007 McKinsey report, which the Government cited extensively with regard to teacher education, was ignored in the promotion of school autonomy. The report stated that, 'few of the most widely supported reform strategies (for instance, giving schools more autonomy, or reducing class sizes) have produced the results promised for them' (Barber and Mourshed 2007, 10). It also claimed that the reason for Singapore's success is its strong central control. The subsequent 2010 McKinsey report adopted a more favourable attitude towards school autonomy, arguing that top performers such as Singapore and Hong Kong have exercised looser control when their education systems have become 'great' (Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber 2010).

Notwithstanding these considerations, assertions that high levels of school autonomy help to explain high performance in East Asia were used to support policies in England designed to grant schools greater autonomy. The policy initiatives subsequently promoted in England have involved changes to three major areas:

(1) Governance and management – no restrictions on who can set up, govern and manage public-funded schools

(2) Curriculum and school calendar – schools can decide whether to follow the national curriculum and set the school terms and hours

(3) Teachers – schools are able to hire untrained/unqualified teachers and set teachers' salaries.

Below we examine the prevailing policies and practices in these three areas in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai.

School autonomy in East Asia: policies and perceptions

Governance and management

Approximately, 79% of public-funded secondary schools in Hong Kong are aided schools, catering for 80% of public secondary pupils, fully subsidised by the government and operated by more than 200 school sponsoring bodies (SSBs), such as churches, charities and non-governmental organisations, under a contractual agreement with the government – the Code of Aid (EDB 2014a). As part of the school-based management reform, all aided schools have since 2005 been required to establish Incorporated Management Committees (IMCs). The major change is that the percentage of managers chosen by SSBs was reduced to 60%.[1] As stipulated in the Education Ordinance, SSBs provide guidelines for IMCs and supervise their performance, as well as establishing the vision and mission of a school; IMCs take charge of daily school operation. Nevertheless, the major sponsoring bodies (e.g. the Catholic and Anglican Churches) were concerned that they would lose control of their schools, as under the new governance framework IMCs are directly accountable to the Education Bureau (EDB) (Pang 2008).

The DSS was introduced in Hong Kong in 1991. In total, 13% of public-funded secondary schools operate under this scheme, serving 13% of public secondary pupils (EDB 2014b). They are allowed to set their own tuition fees and obtain donations, and continue to receive government subsidies (Law 2007). Chan and Tan (2008) argue that the DSS is a 'public-aided' approach to privatisation. In addition, DSS schools enjoy more flexibility in terms of personnel management, language of instruction and student admission compared with their aided counterparts. Particularly, IMCs are not required for them (Pang 2008). Whilst initially the scheme provided a convenient route for former communist schools to obtain public funding, the capacity to charge fees and select pupils subsequently attracted many elite schools to join.

In Singapore, all public-funded schools are subject to the policy and control of the Ministry of Education (SMOE). There are 71% of public secondary pupils enrolled in government schools (73% of all public-funded secondary schools) and 20% in aided schools (18%) (SMOE 2014). Aided schools were mainly established by religious groups, but obtain government subsidies for up to 90% of their total revenue. High performing government and aided schools can also be designated as 'autonomous' schools (16%). Additionally, independent schools (5%), receive an annual per capita grant equivalent to the recurrent cost in government schools. Autonomous and independent schools have been selected by the SMOE, based on their academic merit, and are given more leeway in managing their curriculum, personnel, finance and student admission (Gopinathan and Mardiana 2013). Schools from all categories are operated by their management committees or governing boards.

Schools in Singapore are grouped into 28 geographic clusters that operate as an intermediate level of governance between the SMOE and schools. Membership of a cluster is compulsory for all public-funded schools except for independent schools. Cluster superintendents are given an annual budget to promote collaboration amongst schools, identify career development needs and personnel with potential, and offer financial support for worthwhile school projects. They also supervise and evaluate the performance of principals and vice-principals (Sclafani 2008). In this way, administrative power as to finance, personnel and appraisal has been transferred from the central level to the cluster level.

Shanghai is one of the four provincial-level municipalities under the direct leadership of the central government. A series of national decentralisation reforms since 1985 have shifted most administrative and fiscal power and responsibility for education to the municipal government (Hawkins 2006). Under the guidance of the Ministry of Education (CMOE), a 'Two Tier Government, Two Tier Management' system has since been established in Shanghai (Shen 2007). This means that the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (SMEC) is responsible for implementing national

education policies and formulating municipal education policies; district education bureaus (DEBs) have the authority to implement municipal education policies, finance public schools and monitor their performance (SMEC 2010). Within schools, the Principal Responsibility System introduced in 1985 enables principals, rather than Party secretaries, to run schools.

Since the 1980s, Shanghai has spearheaded the development of people-run (*minban*) schools, which are, in theory, sponsored and managed by non-governmental organisations and individuals. By 2014, 89% of secondary pupils study in government secondary schools (88% of local secondary schools), while people-run secondary schools (12%) cater for 11% of secondary pupils. In reality, 90% of people-run schools are directly or indirectly financed and monitored by DEBs and, as Ding (2012, 70) argues, they 'bear no essential differences from public schools' in terms of curriculum, finance and appointment of school leaders. Only 10% of people-run schools are independent, privately funded and operated with relatively more autonomy (Ding 2012). In other words, only about 1% of local secondary schools in Shanghai operate with a high degree of autonomy.

Curriculum and school calendar

In Hong Kong, aided schools are required by the EDB to prepare their pupils for the local public examination, they adopt the mainstream curriculum prescribed by the EDB and are assessed by the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority. In contrast, 11 out of 62 DSS secondary schools are allowed to offer up to 50% of their intake alternatives to the mainstream curriculum, such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma and General Certificate Education A-levels (*SCMP Good Schools Guide*, June 24, 2013). The mainstream curriculum includes eight Key Learning Areas with a range of permitted compulsory and optional subjects. For each area there is a detailed guide specifying curriculum aims, content, time allocation, learning and teaching strategies, assessments and resources (CDC 2002). Based on the guide, various commercial textbook publishers decide the depth of coverage and the way that topics are explained and presented (Morris and Adamson 2010). The textbooks used are chosen from a 'recommended list' drawn up by the EDB.

School-based curriculum development (SBCD) has been promoted in HK since the 1980s. However, rather than providing an alternative curriculum, Marsh, Morris and Lo (2014, 36) argue that SBCD 'has been, and remains, a means to reify the central curriculum reform initiatives by making them more relevant to and therefore more feasible in the local (school) context'. One principal explained that 'unless it [SBCD] is designed for the public examination … it dies.' The Education and Manpower Bureau[2] (2005) stipulates that there should be no less than 190 school days and 90–93 holidays a year, and that the proposed list of school holidays should

be submitted for approval. Under this general guideline, schools are encouraged to design their own calendar flexibly to meet their local needs.

Secondary pupils in Singapore are divided into three curricula streams, namely, express, normal academic and normal technical, depending on their results in the Primary School Leaving Examination. The national curriculum comprises of a group of prescribed compulsory and optional subjects assessed in national examinations. Pupils from different streams are offered different subjects or different levels of complexity in subject coverage following the SMOE guidance (Tan 2014). Autonomous and independent schools, recruiting the most academically able pupils, are given the power to set their own curricula; nonetheless, only a few of them have strayed significantly from the national curriculum (Tan 2006). One scholar interviewed maintained that 'Singapore is still stuck in the common curriculum.'

The SMOE is responsible for providing the 'Approved Textbooks List', inviting experts to write textbooks for History and Civics and Moral Education, designing syllabuses, assessment modes and special curriculum programmes, monitoring their implementation, and promoting pedagogical approaches. Although SBCD has been promoted in Singapore since the 1980s, as Deng, Gopinathan and Lee (2013) argue, it has referred to the adaption, modification and translation of the national curriculum in specific school contexts. The SMOE sets school terms and stipulates 40 periods of 40-minute curriculum hours per week for secondary schools (Straughan 2011). According to one principal, although schools are allowed to vary the instruction hours, the room left to do so is actually limited.

In Shanghai, pupils from public-funded schools sit for central entrance examinations organised at the municipal level. Following the CMOE's requirements, the SMEC categorises the curriculum into three components: the *basic course* (or national course, 75–80%), which is subject-centric, standardised by the CMOE, compulsory for all public schools and centrally examined; the *enriched course* (10–15%) and the *inquiry-based* course (5%), which are both school-based and not-examined, but developed in compliance with the municipal guidelines (SMEC 2004). Textbooks for all public schools are determined by the SMEC, which adheres to national and municipal curriculum standards and schemes.

Since the 1990s, the SMEC has attempted to further the implementation of quality-oriented education through promoting SBCD initiatives that have either concentrated on non-examination areas or been designed to deepen the basic course. Furthermore, as Tan (2013, 94) notes, schools are obliged to 'take orders, receive training and carry out specific school-based initiatives from the district authorities'. The SMEC (2004) stipulates school terms and specifies that each term includes 34 teaching weeks, 2 social practice weeks and 4 weeks for examinations and special events; and a school day is composed of 6–7 periods of 40 minutes, 15–20 minutes morning/noon meeting and 35–40 minutes physical exercises.

Teachers

Teachers in Hong Kong must be registered as either a 'registered teacher' or 'permitted teacher'. The former are required to possess a recognised teaching certificate in addition to a degree qualification; they are given permanent posts and allowed to teach all subjects. The latter do not need to have a teaching certificate, but sign a temporary contract and can only teach a few designated subjects (e.g. music, arts and sports) when registered teachers are in shortage (ED 1994). Teachers are also categorised as either Graduate (GM's) or Certificated (CM's) Masters/Mistresses; GM's must hold a university degree and are paid more than CM's. Schools are only permitted by the government to employ 85% of their salaries grant for GM's, despite the fact that 96% of secondary teachers are now trained university graduates (EDB 2014b).

Principals are responsible for checking the eligibility of job applicants. As soon as an appointment is confirmed by an IMC, applications for teacher registration are submitted to the EDB (ED 1994). As one principal explained, the number of teachers that a school can hire depends on the permitted number of classes and the stipulated teacher-to-class ratios. Aided schools strictly follow the salary scales and allowances stipulated in the Code of Aid. In contrast, DSS schools are not required to conform to the proportion of GM and CM. This enables them to hire more junior CM staff with comparatively lower salary costs and more supporting staff, such as teaching assistants and administrators (Chan and Tan 2008).

In Singapore, the vast majority of teachers are 'appointed teachers'; they are degree holders, centrally selected and trained at the National Institute of Education, appointed as civil servants and assigned to schools by the SMOE based on central needs as well as their preferences. Although teachers can request a different posting after two years, the request has to be approved by the SMOE. Teachers are employed on the government salary scales as soon as they are admitted to the National Institute of Education. In addition, teachers are rewarded financially according to their performance grades, given by 'reporting officers' (usually the heads of departments) and principals (Lee and Tan 2010). The annual performance bonus can amount to between one and three months' salary for average to outstanding performers (Sclafani 2008).

Another type of teacher is the 'contract teacher' – they are not necessarily trained and are only employed short-term to fill temporary gaps. In reality, as one SMOE officer emphasised, the SMOE 'would not allow schools to have too many such posts'. Comparatively, independent schools have more freedom in appointing teachers and setting salary scales within their own budgets. Nonetheless, there are some regulative restrictions for appointed teachers working in independent schools. For example, as one scholar explained, after teaching for six years, teachers of independent

schools have to make a choice – 'either return to government schools, or give up their government employment and sign a contract with the independent school'.

In China, according to the 1993 *Teacher Law*, prospective secondary teachers must hold a degree and a teaching certificate. In Shanghai, the appointment of teachers is mainly administered at the district level. As principals elaborated, district human resource bureaus and DEBs approve the plan for budgeted teaching posts of every school. Schools scrutinise applicants' qualifications and organise trial teaching sessions. The district Educational Human Resource Exchange and Service Centre interviews and examines the school-selected candidates. The DEBs then authorise schools to hire those they deem qualified. According to principals, 'talents' without a teaching certificate may be given one-year probation in schools; they can be transferred to more permanent terms only if they obtain a teaching certificate within that year.

The 'merit pay' system has been implemented in Shanghai since 2009. A teacher's pay is now composed of 70% *basic pay* and 30% *merit pay* (comprising 70% *basic merit pay* and 30% *reward merit pay*). The basic pay and basic merit pay are standardised across all schools and determined at the municipal level, according to teacher's professional titles, responsibilities and workloads; and the reward merit pay is decided by schools depending on teacher appraisal (SMEC 2009). In other words, as some principals complained, under the new system, they only have the power to determine 30% of the bonus, which amounts to about 9% of the total pay. In 90% of people-run schools, as Ding (2012) demonstrates, DEBs have put a large proportion of their teachers on the government payroll. This attracts more people to work in those schools and also enables DEBs to have a say in their teacher appointments.

Comparison and discussion

Table 1 summarises the differences in the nature of school autonomy across each of the three dimensions analysed. From this, it can be seen that the images projected by English policymakers have little congruence with the 'reality'. In other words, the policy initiatives promoted do not accord with their evidential basis. Firstly, English secondary schools generally enjoy higher levels of autonomy than their East Asian counterparties. Secondly, drawing on Winstanley, Sorabji and Dawson's (1995) distinction between 'criteria power' and 'operational power', whilst some 'operational power' has been granted to some schools in East Asia, schools in England have been portrayed as being granted both 'criteria' and 'operational power'. However, the evidence (Higham and Earley 2013) is that, in contrast to the policy rhetoric, in practice, school principals in England only see themselves as exercising 'operational power' and do not view themselves as able

Table 1. Autonomy in the main types of secondary schools in England and East Asia.

The nature of school autonomy in the main types of secondary schools			England (Academies and free schools)	Hong Kong (Aided schools)	East Asia	
					Singapore (Government schools)	Shanghai (Government schools)
Areas of school autonomy	Governance and management	Who can set up publicly funded schools?	No restrictions	Government and SSBs	Government	Government
		Who runs and manages publicly funded schools?	Free from the control of local authorities	EDB and SSBs	SMOE and cluster superintendents	CMOE, SMEC and DEBs
	Curriculum and school calendar	Are schools required to follow the national/mainstream curriculum?	No	Yes	Yes, except for 3 independent schools, which can provide alternative certificates	Yes, all public schools, even most people-run schools
		Can schools set school terms and hours?	Yes	No, the EDB stipulates less than 190 days and 90–93 holidays a year	No, terms and curriculum time are stipulated by the SMOE	No, terms and hours are strictly stipulated by the SMEC
	Teachers	Can schools hire untrained/unqualified teachers?	Yes	A teaching certificate is a requirement for permanent appointments	Teachers are centrally selected, trained, and appointed by the SMOE	A teaching certificate is required by law

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

The nature of school autonomy in the main types of secondary schools	England (Academies and free schools)	Hong Kong (Aided schools)	East Asia	
			Singapore (Government schools)	Shanghai (Government schools)
Can schools set teachers' gross salaries	Yes	No, salary scales and allowances regulated in the Code of Aid	Yes, but only annual performance bonus	Yes, but only the reward merit pay
Greater autonomy is given to whom?(percent of all public secondary schools)	Academies and Free Schools (57). All schools are encouraged to convert to Academy status and 500 new free schools launched.	DSS schools (13), many elite aided schools joined the DSS from 2000, which enables them to charge fees and select pupils	Autonomous schools and independent schools (21), mainly high performing schools which recruit the most able pupils	Local authorities and independent people-run schools (1), rather than the vast majority of schools

Note:SSBs = school sponsoring bodies; EDB = Education Bureau; SMOE = Singapore's Ministry of Education; CMOE = China's Ministry of Education; SMEC = Shanghai Municipal Education Committee; DEBs = district education bureaus.

to exercise 'criteria power'. This is primarily because of the powerful influence of the nature of the accountability system, which defines the criteria by which successful schools are defined, and which is centrally determined.

Notwithstanding, overall schools in England have a higher degree of autonomy; for example, English head teachers are given the power to set school terms and hours. The EDB provides a guideline as to the minimum school days. The SMOE prescribes school terms and curriculum hours. Schools in Shanghai must follow the calendar specified by the SMEC. With regard to teachers' salaries, in England, the total salary can be set by head teachers, while in the three East Asian societies there are salary scales provided by their education departments. What can be decided by schools is the annual performance bonus in Singapore and reward merit pay in Shanghai. Only a few schools, such as independent schools in Singapore, are free to determine the entire salary. Both academies and free schools in England are not under the control of local authorities, while all public schools in Shanghai are directly governed and monitored by DEBs. Singapore also has comparable intermediate levels of governance – cluster superintendents.

As noted above, whilst the system of school inspections and public examinations in England encourages convergence, schools can in principle promote their own belief systems (e.g. religious beliefs), choose textbooks and select which examination board they use. In contrast, the powerful role of the national/mainstream curriculum in East Asia is reinforced by the states' control over the textbooks used, teacher education and the existence of a single national/central examination body. In essence, the national/central exam is based wholly on the national/mainstream curriculum, which is codified in the approved textbooks.

In England there are no restrictions on who can apply to establish public-funded schools. Individuals (i.e., teachers and parents), educational institutions (i.e., universities and independent schools), organisations (i.e., charities, community and faith groups) and businesses are all encouraged to open and operate academics and free schools. In Hong Kong, sponsoring bodies (i.e., faith groups, alumni associations and various organisations) are permitted to set up aided and DSS schools; however, no school has been established by teachers and parents. In Singapore and Shanghai, governments (national/municipal/district) are the sole providers of public schooling.

Whilst a teaching certificate is not compulsory in England to enter the teaching profession; it is an expectation that is selectively relaxed in the other societies. In fact, since 2005, the long-term policy in Hong Kong has been to require all new teachers to be trained graduates (EDB 2014c); in Shanghai, teaching certificate examinations are centrally designed and organised; and teachers in Singapore are selected, employed and trained by the SMOE.

While reforms designed to increase school autonomy have been introduced in East Asia, their nature differs significantly from those promoted in England. Firstly and most significantly, in England, the reforms designed to increase school autonomy are not targeted at all schools and pupils; all schools are encouraged to convert to Academy status. Since August 2010, the number of academies has increased from 203 to 2591 in March 2013 (Higham and Earley 2013). By January 2014, 57% of public secondary schools had achieved academy status, catering for 59% of all secondary pupils (DfE 2014). More than 240 free schools were operating and in 2015, the newly elected Conservative Government launched the plan of 500 new free schools a few weeks after taking office (Wintour, *Guardian*, March 6, 2015). Notably, academies and free schools are neither given the formal power to select pupils on academic merit nor to charge parents extra fees.

In contrast, greater autonomy in Singapore and Hong Kong has been mainly transferred by the government to a small and selected number of schools. In Hong Kong, although the DSS was not originally designed for elite schools, the EDB revised the scheme in 2000 to allow DSS schools to select pupils and charge fees and this attracted a number of prestigious Band 1 aided schools (pupils are divided into three bands based on academic performance) to convert to DSS status. Providing these schools with the power to select pupils and charge fees has introduced a degree of elitism into the school system. This shift aligns the school system more closely with a political and economic system that has, throughout colonial times and currently, been dominated by an elite comprising the government and business leaders (Goodstadt 2014). Hong Kong's Chief Executive revealed his own elitist views recently when he rejected demands that his post be elected through more 'open voting'. He explained: 'you would be talking to half of the people in Hong Kong who earn less than $1800 a month. Then you would end up with that kind of politics and policies'. As Krugman (2014) opines, his concern was that the bottom 50% of Hong Kong's population would vote for policies that might aid the poor and harm the rich.

A central message in Singapore's national narrative is that society generally, and schooling specifically, is underpinned by meritocracy and consequently peoples life chances depend solely on their ability and hard work (Mauzy and Milne 2002). In this context, more autonomy has been granted to academically 'high-flying' schools (i.e., 28 autonomous schools and 8 independent schools out of 170 public secondary schools), which usually possess 'capable principals, experienced teachers, a strong alumni network and responsible governing boards', and tend to recruit the most promising and able pupils (Tan 2007, 307). In both Hong Kong and Singapore, 'better' schools within selective educational systems have been allowed to exercise greater autonomy. Both cases differ markedly from the situation in England and are contrary to the claims in the SWP and OECD reports that by being granted more autonomy, schools can better improve themselves.

In terms of function, school autonomy in East Asia has involved a 'recentralisation', 'decentralised centralisation' or 'centralised decentralisation' through the allocation of operational power to selected schools by the state. For example, Pang (2008, 30) points out that the introduction of IMCs in Hong Kong has resulted in 'the removal of the intermediate control structure' of SSBs, which has increased the central government's control of schools. In Singapore, Ng (2008, 122) argues that 'the government still carries a great responsibility for achieving national outcomes' and what has been decentralised is actually the tactical power of management.

With regard to the future, Singapore seems to have no plans to expand independent and autonomous schools. The number of independent schools has been maintained at 8 since 1992; 18 autonomous schools were set up between 1994 and 1997, only 10 more schools have since been granted 'autonomous status' (Tan 2009). In Hong Kong, the DSS schools have been subject to increasing critical scrutiny as a result of financial malfeasance in some schools (Panel on Education 2014) and public concern about the implications for equity associated with the high fees some charge, admissions policies and more extensive financial resources (Pong 2013). It seems unlikely the scheme will be further expanded in the near future.

China's decentralisation reforms since the mid-1980s, as Hawkins (2006) argues, have been primarily driven by fiscal considerations – the central government could not afford to wholly fund such a vast education system. This has, in effect, resulted in more autonomy being transferred from the centre to the local level, along with the responsibility for education provision. However, the decentralisation has mainly taken place at the municipal level rather than the school level; in other words, educational policies and practices in Shanghai are still highly centralised and standardised across all schools in almost all the aspects examined above. Shanghai's latest plans have even proposed the standardisation at the municipal level of schools' funding and facilities and teachers' allocation and salaries in an attempt to reduce the growing disparities across districts (SMEC 2010).

In contrast, school autonomy in England has been interpreted as a specific means to achieve the marketisation of education driven by neo-liberalism and neo-conservativism (Whitty, Power, and Halpin 2003). This has been evident in a number of reforms aimed at promoting school competition, the diversity of educational provision and greater parental choice. Significant policy initiatives include the 1988 Education Reform Act under the Conservative leadership, the introduction of academies during the New Labour years and the expansion of academies and free schools by the Coalition Government. Over the last four decades, successive Governments have consistently sought to develop a 'quasi market' and redefine the role of the state in the education sector by transferring power from local authorities to individual schools and promoting new types of highly autonomous schools. As Glatter (2012) argues:

> … there is a distinctive element – the gradual defenestration of the intermediate tier of government with an apparent goal of having just two significant layers of governance: the individual school operating in a competitive local market and a distant central government and its agencies as the sole political authority. (570)

It is in the context of this wholesale belief in the self-evident benefits of school autonomy that English policymakers have sought external justification for their reforms. East Asia has provided a convenient, if not wholly accurate, source of external referencing.

The promotion of school autonomy has operated in parallel with the promotion of school accountability. Accountability systems introduced in all four societies have influenced school-level decision-making and encouraged conformity to national/central frameworks. However, the differences between the accountability systems of the East Asian societies and that in England are significant and the nature of the accountability system in England serves to maintain a more direct level of central control. In England, school accountability is designed to raise standards by making information and data about schools publicly available in order to assist parents to make choices and to encourage competition between schools. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills allows 'governing bodies and head teachers to choose for themselves how to evaluate their work' (DfE 2010, 69) and conducts external inspections to grade schools and produce public league tables. In contrast, school inspection information in Singapore and Shanghai is not made public and formal league tables have been abandoned in recent years (SMOE 2012; Tan 2013). In Hong Kong, Territory-wide System Assessments, as part of the accountability mechanism, are meant to inform policy and school improvement rather than make comparisons. Moreover, in all three societies, self-evaluation has been recentralised and standardised by specifying the targets, domains, standards or performance indicators (Law 2007; Ng 2008; Tan 2013).

World Culture theorists acknowledge the existence of divergence across education systems by drawing on the concept from organisational theory of 'loose coupling' (Orton and Weick 1990). But they focus on the generic themes that policymakers across the world have promoted, and from this claim that there is a convergence of policy to a 'world model' (Carney, Rappleye, and Silova 2012). As demonstrated above, although substantive reforms have been pursued under the common mantra of enhancing school autonomy and been legitimated by referencing to 'world-class' systems/international models, the scope, form and nature of implementation has both varied markedly and been defined by local contexts. Further, the variations are not merely a function of implementation issues or local variants on a common theme; as has been shown above, the nature, purpose and conceptualisations of school autonomy are fundamentally different in each of the contexts that have been studied.

Conclusion

The UK Government has provided a distorted portrayal of external evidence to endorse domestic policy-making (also see Morris 2012). Overall, the level of school autonomy that operates in England is greater than that in Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai, and in those societies it serves different functions and is granted to different and selected providers.

More specifically, this paper demonstrates how the concept of school autonomy has been reconstructed, incorporated or re-contextualised, and reconceptualised to both reflect and advance the prevailing values/ideology, or as Schriewer and Martinez (2004) terms it, the 'socio-logic', which drive policy in each of the domestic contexts. In Hong Kong, school autonomy has been used to strengthen the role of elite/fee-paying schools; in Singapore, it was used to reinforce meritocracy by providing greater autonomy to those schools catering for the academically most able pupils; and, in Shanghai, the priority was to devolve fiscal responsibility from the central to the local. In marked contrast: autonomy in England was driven by a Libertarian/Conservative desire to adjust the role of the state and to encourage diversity and competition amongst and between all schools. As Nick Gibb (2014) explained, the reforms designed to increase autonomy 'reaffirmed' his belief that 'good government does not improve public services. It enables public services to improve themselves'.

Rather than engaging in policy *borrowing*, the Government has selectively *referenced* policies in East Asia in an attempt to promote and legitimate its long preferred policy agenda. In other words, 'East Asian education systems' have been employed as a 'flag of convenience' (Lynch 1998) or a form of 'political theatre' in order to provide legitimacy in England's political arena. This has resulted in a high degree of incongruence between the English representation of East Asia and the 'reality' in this region, which will not result in England adopting the same policies as those adopted by the 'world-class' systems. However, the resulting very loose coupling between the images and the 'reality' concerning school autonomy may not be a major concern, as 'world-class' systems are, as has been shown above, diverse in their own practices. As cited at the outset, if a cultural revolution is indeed required in England, perhaps the best place to begin is by rectifying the distorted images of East Asia that continue to dominate the political and educational discourse in England.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Notes

1. This means that 40% members of IMCs must be elected from teacher, parent, alumni and the community.
2. Renamed EDB in 2007.

References

Auld, E., and P. Morris. 2014. "Comparative Education, the 'New Paradigm' and Policy Borrowing: Constructing Knowledge for Education Reform." *Comparative Education* 50 (2): 129–155.

Barber, M., and M. Mourshed. 2007. *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Came out on Top*. London: McKinsey.

Carney, S., J. Rappleye, and I. Silova. 2012. "Between the Faith and Science: World Culture Theory and Comparative Education." *Comparative Education Review* 56 (3): 366–393.

CDC (Curriculum Development Council). 2002. *Key Learning Areas Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 3)*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Chan, D., and J. Tan. 2008. "Privatisation and the Rise of Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools and Independent Schools in Hong Kong and Singapore." *International Journal of Educational Management* 22 (6): 464–487.

Deng, Z. Y., S. Gopinathan, and C. K. Lee. 2013. "Introduction." In *Globalisation and the Singapore Curriculum: From Policy to Classroom*, edited by Z. Y. Deng, S. Gopinathan and C. K. Lee, 3–12. Singapore: Springer.

DfE. 2014. *Schools, Pupils and Their Characteristics: January 2014 (National Statistics)*. Access January 10, 2015 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014

DfE (Department for Education). 2010. *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper 2010*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

Ding, X. 2012. *Policy Metamorphosis in China: A Case Study of Minban Education in Shanghai*. Plymouth: Lexington Books.

ED (Education Department). 1994. *Code of Aid for Secondary Schools*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

EDB (Education Bureau). 2014a. *EDB's Replies to LegCo Members Initial Written Questions in Examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15*. Accessed November 27, 2014. http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/about-edb/press/legco/others/edb-c.pdf

EDB (Education Bureau). 2014b. *General Information on DSS*. Accessed November 27, 2014. http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/primary-secondary/applicable-to-primary-secondary/direct-subsidy-scheme/index/info-sch.html

EDB (Education Bureau). 2014c. *Teacher Training and Qualifications*. Accessed November 27, 2014. http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/teacher/qualification-training-development/qualification/teacher-training-qualifications/index.html

Education and Manpower Bureau. 2005. *School Holiday List and Student Learning Time (Circular No. 7/2005)*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Forestier, K., and M. Crossley. 2014. "International Education Policy Transfer – Borrowing Both Ways: The Hong Kong and England Experience." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. 45 (5): 664–685.

Gibb, N. 2014. "Fruits of Autonomy." November 13. Accessed November 27, 2014 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-gibb-the-fruits-of-autonomy

Glatter, R. 2012. "Persistent Preoccupations: The Rise and Rise of School Autonomy and Accountability in England." *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 40 (5): 559–575.

Goodstadt, F. L. 2014. *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Gopinathan, S., and A. B. Mardiana. 2013. "Globalization, the State and Curriculum Reform." In *Globalisation and the Singapore Curriculum: From Policy to Classroom*, edited by Z. Deng, S. Gopinathan and C. K. E. Lee, 15–32. Singapore: Springer.

Gove, M. 2010. "My Revolution for Culture in the Classroom: Why We Must Raise Education Standards So Children Can Compete with the Rest of the World." *The Telegraph*, 28 December. Accessed November 27, 2014. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/8227535/Michael-Gove-myrevolution-for-culture-in-classroom.html

Gove, M. 2011. "Speech to the Policy Exchange on Free Schools." June 20. Accessed November 27, 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/2012-oecd-pisa-results

Gove, M. 2013. "Oral Statement in the House on the OECD's 2012 PISA Results." December 3. Accessed November 27, 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/2012-oecd-pisa-results

Gove, M. 2014. "Speaks about the Future of Education Reform." July 10. Accessed November 27, 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/michael-gove-speaks-about-the-future-of-education-reform

Hawkins, J. H. 2006. "Walking on Three Legs: Centralisation, Decentralisation, and Recentralisation in Chinese Education." In *Educational Decentralisation: Asian Experiences and Conceptual Contributions*, edited by C. Bjork, 27–42. New York: Springer.

Higham, R., and P. Earley. 2013. "School Autonomy and Government Control: School Leaders' Views on a Changing Policy Landscape in England." *Educational Management Administration* 41 (6): 707–717.

Krugman, P. 2014. "Plutocrats against Democracy." *New York times*, October 23. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/24/opinion/paul-krugman-plutocrats-against-democracy.html?_r=0

Law, W. W. 2007. "Schooling in Hong Kong." In *Going to School in East Asia*, edited by G. A. Postiglione and J. Tan, 86–121. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Lee, C. K. E., and M. Y. Tan. 2010. "Rating Teachers and Rewarding Teacher Performance: The Context of Singapore." Paper presented at APEC Conference on Replicating Exemplary Practices in Mathematics Education, Koh Samui, Thailand, March 7–12.

Luhmann, N. 1981. *Political Theory in the Welfare State* [Politicshe Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat]. Munich: Olzog.

Lynch, J. 1998. "International Transfer in Dysfunctional Paradigms." In *Learning and Teaching in an International Context: Research, Theory and Practice*, edited by D. Johnson., B. Smith., and M. Crossley, 7–33. Bristol: Centre for International Studies.

Marsh, C., P. Morris, and J. T. Y. Lo. 2014. "Centralisation and Decentralisation: An Historical Analysis of School-Based Curriculum Development Initiatives in Hong Kong" In *Asia's High Performance Education Systems: The Case of Hong Kong*, edited by C. Marsh and J. C. K. Lee, 33–50. New York, NY: Routledge.

Mauzy, K. D., and R. S. Milne. 2002. *Singapore Politics under the People's Action Party.* London: Routledge.

Meyer, J. W., J. Boli, G. M. Thomas, and F. O. Ramirez. 1997. "World Society and the Nation-state." *American Journey of Sociology* 103 (1): 144–181.

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): 89–107.

Morris, P. 2015. "Comparative Education, PISA, Politics and Educational Reform: A Cautionary Note." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 45 (3): 470–474.

Morris, P., and B. Adamson. 2010. *Curriculum, Schooling and Society in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Mourshed, M., C. Chijioke, and M. Barber. 2010. *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*. London: McKinsey.

Ng, P. T. 2008. "The Phases and Paradoxes of Educational Quality Assurance: The Case of the Singapore Education System." *Quality Assurance in Education* 16 (2): 112–125.

OECD. 2013. "School Governance, Assessments and Accountability." In *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-8-en.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2010. *Education at a Glance: Presentation*. London, September.

Orton, J. D., and K. E. Weick. 1990. "Loosely Coupled Systems: A Reconceptualisation." *The Academy of Management Review* 15 (2): 203–223.

Panel on Education. 2014. *Background Brief on Issues Related to Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools* (Meeting on January 13, 2014). http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/ed/papers/ed0113cb4-284-5-e.pdf

Pang, I. W. 2008. "School-based Management in Hong Kong: Centralizing or Decentralising." *Education Research Policy Practice* 7: 17–33.

Pong, W. Y. 2013. "Traditional Elite Schools Convert to DSS Schools." [Chuantong mingxiao zhuan zhizi]. *Mingpao*, May 29. Access January 10, 2015. http://pong didit.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/blog-post.html

Rappleye, J. 2012. "Reimagining Attraction and 'Borrowing' in Education: Introducing a Political Production Model." In *Policy Borrowing and Lending. World Yearbook of Education 2012*, edited by G.Steiner-Khamsi and F.Waldow, 121–147. New York: Routledge.

Rizvi, F. 2006. "Imagination and the Globalisation of Educational Policy Research." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 4 (2): 193–205.

Schriewer, J. 1990. "The Method of Comparison and the Need for Externalization: Methodological Criteria and Sociological Concepts." In *Theories and Methods in Comparative Education*, edited by J. Schriewer and B. Holmes, 25–83. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Schriewer, J., and C. Martinez. 2004. "Constructions of Internationality in Education." In *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, edited by G. Steiner-Khamsi, 29–53. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sclafani, S. 2008. *Rethinking Human Capital in Education: Singapore as a Model for Teacher Development*. A paper prepared for The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program. Retrieved from http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/education/SingaporeEDU.pdf

Sellar, S., and B. Lingard. 2013. "Looking East: Shanghai, PISA 2009 and the Reconstitution of Reference Societies in the Global Education Policy Field." *Comparative Education* 49 (4): 464–485.

Shen, X. M. 2007. *Shanghai Education*. Shanghai: Century Publishing Co., Ltd.

SMEC. 2009. *Opinions on the Appraisal System of Teachers' Merit-pay in Compulsory Education Schools by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission* [Shanghaishi jiaoyu weiyuanhui guanyu zuohao yiwujiaoyu xuexiao jiaoshi jixiaokaohegongzuo de yijian]. Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal Education Commission.

SMEC. 2010. *Outline for Shanghai Municipal Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* [Shanghaishi zhongchangqi jiaoyu gaige fazhan gangyao]. Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal Education Commission.

SMEC (Shanghai Municipal Education Commission). 2004. *Shanghai Municipal Curriculum Scheme for Primary and Secondary Schools* [Shanghaishi zhongxiaoxue kecheng fangan]. Shanghai: Shanghai Municipal Education Commission.

SMOE. 2014. *Education Statistics Digest*. Accessed November 27, 2014. http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-statistics-digest/files/esd-2014.pdf

SMOE (Ministry of Education, Singapore). 2012. *Press Release: MOE Removes Secondary School Banding and Revamps School Awards*. Accessed November 27, 2014 http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2012/09/moe-removes-secondary-school-b.php

Steiner-Khamsi, G. 2012. "Understanding Policy Borrowing and Lending: Building Comparative Policy Studies." *Policy Borrowing and Lending. World Yearbook of Education 2012*, edited by G. Steiner-Khamsi and F. Waldow, 411–427. New York: Routledge.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. 2014. "Cross-national Policy Borrowing: Understanding Reception and Translation." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34: 153–167.

Straughan, P. T. 2011. *School Hours and Activities (Parliamentary Replies)*. Accessed 27 November 2014. http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/parliamentary-replies/2011/02/school-hours-and-activities.php

Takayama, K. 2010. "Politics of Externalization in Reflexive Times: Reinventing Japanese Education Reform Discourses through 'Finnish Success'." *Comparative Education Review* 54 (1): 51–75.

Tan, J. 2006. "Limited Decentralisation in the Singapore Education System." In *Educational Decentralisation: Asian Experiences and Conceptual Contributions*, edited by C. Bjork, 27–42. New York: Springer.

Tan J. 2007. "Schooling in Singapore". In *Going to School in East Asia*, edited by G. A. Postiglione and J. Tan, 301–319. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Tan, C. 2013. *Learning from Shanghai: Lessons on Achieving Educational Success*. Singapore: Springer.

Tan, J. 2014. *Education in Singapore: For What, and for Whom?* Accessed November 27, 2014. http://ries.revues.org/3856.

Taylor, C. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Truss, E. 2013. "Speaks to the School Leaders Summit about Reforms to the Curriculum, Exams and School Accountability." October 18. Accessed November 27, 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/elizabeth-truss-speaks-about-school-reform

Waldow, F. 2012. "Standardisation and Legitimacy: Two Central Concepts in Research on Educational Borrowing and Lending." In *Policy Borrowing and Lending. World Yearbook of Education 2012*, edited by G. Steiner-Khamsi and F. Waldow, 411–427. New York: Routledge.

Waldow, F., K. Takayama, and Y. K. Sung. 2014. "Rethinking the Pattern of External Policy Referencing: Media Discourses over the 'Asian Tigers' PISA Success in Australia, Germany and South Korea." *Comparative Education*. 50 (3): 302–321.

Whitty, G., S. Power, and D. Halpin. 2003. *Devolution and Choice in Education: The School, the State and the Market*. Michigan: Open University Press.

Winstanley, D., D. Sorabji, and S. Dawson. 1995. "When the Pieces Don't Fit: A Stakeholder Power Matrix to Analyse Public Sector Restructuring." *Public Money and Management.* 15 (2): 19–26.

Wintour, P. 2015. "David Cameron Will Pledge to Open 153 New Free Schools." *Guardian*, March 6. http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/06/david-cameron-will-pledge-to-open-153-new-free-schools