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Exporting Finnish Teacher Education: Transnational Pressures on National Models

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Abstract

This article analyses empirical data to assess the possible transfer of Finnish teacher education policy, and more specifically, the university training school, into another context. Transnational organisations increasingly pressure nation-states to carry out education policy change, especially due to dissatisfaction with international assessment outcomes. As a high performer in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), administered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Finland has been at the centre of international attention. PISA revealed that the high quality of Finnish teachers contributes to the overall calibre of the country's education system. Thus, Finnish teacher education has become a model for other education systems. This article uses empirical research to explore the export possibilities of the Finnish *normaalikoulu*, or university training school. It implements qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews with Finnish educationalists to explore the possible export of Finnish education, the implications in terms of policy transfer, and the migration of ideas, specifically the university-affiliated, teacher training school. The export and migration of Finnish education and its impact on education policy are discussed in this article, along with educational export's position in transnational policy formation.

Keywords: Finland; PISA; education policy; export; teacher education

Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey has made a considerable impact on education policy. Finland's consistently high performance in PISA has captured international attention for years, and research attributes much of Finland's success in PISA to the high quality of its teachers (Chung, 2009; Department for Education, 2010; McKinsey, 2007). Analysis of top performing countries in PISA has suggested that the quality

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of an education system cannot surpass the quality of the teachers (DfE, 2010; McKinsey, 2007). In light of these findings, the United Kingdom (UK) government released a policy document, the Schools White Paper in November 2010, outlining goals and reforms for England's education policy. The paper, entitled *The Importance of Teaching*, mentions Finland repeatedly (DfE, 2010). It singled out Finnish teacher education for its rigorous training, and the *normaalikoulu*, or university-affiliated, teacher training school as a positive example for English teacher education reform:

> Every university offering education sciences in Finland is closely linked to a school, in which prospective teachers undertake classroom teaching practice under the constant guidance and supervision of experienced teacher trainers. These schools act as a link between teaching and the latest academic research and innovation. (DfE, 2010, p. 24)

This implies that UK policymakers proposed the "borrowing" of the Finnish teacher training schools in response to the increasing impact of transnational organisations and international achievement studies on national education policy. Looking elsewhere (cross-national attraction) commonly occurs when aspiring towards improvement. Some of the policy changes outlined in the White Paper, therefore, become just one example of educational policy borrowing influenced by PISA. While many academic articles on this subject view policy from the borrowing context, this article explores the perspectives of the "lenders", or the Finnish view of Finnish teacher education, and more specifically, the *normaalikoulu*, as an "export" product.

This raises the research question:

- What is the perspective of the exporting country of this policy migration?

The literature review discusses the transnational contexts of education policy formation and policy borrowing in reference to export and migration. However, the main focus of this article explores educational export possibilities with empirical data gathered from one university in Finland, with specific reference to teacher education and to the *normaalikoulu*.

Literature review

The shift of educational power to the transnational level coaxes policymakers to look internationally for educational inspiration. The 2010 Schools White Paper proposal of University Training Schools is just one example of this kind of inspiration. While situations do exist where education policy borrowing occurs without political impetus, the ever-increasing connection between education and economic competitiveness adds to the potential for uncritical transfer. This literature review thus discusses the various influences upon transnational contexts of educational policy formation. It delves into three main drivers of the increasing importance of the transnational space in education policy: globalisation, economics, and transnational organisations such as PISA. These drivers

stimulate the push for Finnish educational export. The literature review also explores policy borrowing within the field of comparative education, and especially how it relates to the export of Finnish teacher education policy.

Transnational contexts of education policy formation

Globalisation has an increasing influence over education policy (Dale & Robertson, 2002). The "Globally Structured Agenda for Education" sees the economy as responsible for globalisation and hence its effects on education (Dale, 2000, pp. 427-428; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p. 424). Therefore, some argue that the international realm now has more influence on education and education policy reform than the national arena (Kamens & McNeeley, 2009). Economics, globalisation, and international organisations hold much influence over global education policy; thus, as it relates to the aims of this article, PISA influences education policy on the national level. The transfer of the Finnish *normaalikoulu* to the English context is just one example of this.

The effects of globalisation and education policy lead to rapid and competitive growth of education systems; education policymakers have a vested interest in the level of "attractiveness" of their educational "products" in the "global marketplace" (Ozga & Jones, 2006, p. 2). This aligns with the main aims of this paper, tracing global influences on education and the potential for "packaged" policy transfer, in the form of an exportable product. While this paper cannot allow for a full analysis of globalisation, as its definitions, processes, and purposes are oft-debated (e.g. Dale & Robertson, 2002), we see how globalisation has affected education policy and economic competition due to a shift in power from the nation-state to a transnational space.

A strong economy is indicative of a successful education system and, conversely, a country with a struggling economy could easily place blame upon a faulty education system (Tobin et al., 2009). Therefore, education policy changes often occur as a reaction to adverse economic conditions. The OECD and its education initiatives have led to education's increasingly important relationship to economic conditions; PISA helps stimulate this competition on a global level (Moutsios, 2009). More analysis needs to focus on the transnational interactions in education policy; thus, this paper aims to shed light on the increasing, and not often researched role of educational export. Education has become a "global edu-business" in recent years (Ball, 2012, p. 2). However, policy borrowing literature, concentrating on the "import" of education policy (Ball, 2012, p. 2), overlooks the export.

Educational exports and products benefit from a fear of educational failure. "Negative external evaluation" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 778), for example, poor performance in PISA, discussed later, fuels such fear of perceived educational misfortune (Ball, 2012). Thus, exporting a policy from a high-performing country in PISA could help prevent this educational failure (Ball, 2012). This prompts governments to purchase knowledge from those with "appropriate" education policies (Ball, 2012, p. 99). A country such as Finland,

as indicated by PISA, has such appropriate policy, and the aforementioned research delving into the reasons for Finland's high PISA outcomes has highlighted Finnish teacher education policy.

Ball (2012, p. 106) confirms the "extensive flow" of global influences in education policy. In fact, "experience, knowledge, and expertise" can be repackaged, sold, and exported "without much attention being given to the risks and problems associated with the policies and models involved" (Ball, 2012, p. 10). This echoes the "quick fix" (Noah, 1984, p. 550; Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780) policy solutions discussed later in this article. In fact, the problems from the exporting countries' policies "are erased" when exported to external contexts (Ball, 2012, p. 107), thus creating an interesting dilemma in terms of the educational culture of the lending country and the possibility for uncritical policy transfer. In addition to packaging education into an exportable product, a neo-liberal view of society allows for the acceptance of standardised answers to educational problems.

Internationally, the OECD has emerged as *the* organisation that sets the standards and measures the quality of education systems. Similarly, it gives policy recommendations that have much impact on the national level (Dall, 2011). Countries that perform well in PISA, such as Finland, are now considered to be effective education systems (ibid.). International assessments thus set the standardisation trend in education, and similarly, international agencies such as the OECD help set the norms for testing (Kamens & McNeeley, 2009). Due to this, education policy borrowing has been changing and evolving (Moutsios, 2009). Education policy borrowers and lenders make policy change and comparison in reference to PISA; the search for "best practice" has come under a transnational context (Moutsios, 2009). Assessments such as PISA play a large, and increasing, role in the global context of education policymaking. In fact, international assessments have a strong relationship with educational reform and often serve as the catalyst for educational change (Kamens & McNeely, 2009). Politicians have a vested interest in achieving high rankings in international league tables and have an impetus to steer policy in this direction.

PISA has deeply influenced education and education policy worldwide, and has become one of the main indicators of the quality and efficiency of a country's education policy (Kim et al., 2009; Dall, 2011). PISA not only sets standards, but it also sets into motion a "never-ending hunt" for achievement in the survey, as "the push for improved performance never stops" (Pongratz, 2006, p. 481). PISA, while not the cause, arguably facilitated a paradigm shift in education's purpose, as the formerly intrinsic value of education is now measured in terms of global competition (Dall, 2011).

Strong problem solving skills, as suggested by the OECD, are essential in the knowledge economy; however, PISA's influence encourages a narrow curriculum with targets and testing (Dall, 2011). Organisations such as the OECD increasingly influence countries, especially "weaker" ones, as a result of "relentless global marketing of favoured educational policies" (Green, 2003, p. 86). PISA results from countries such as

Finland, while suggesting education systems should concentrate on skills such as problem solving, actually promote the narrowing of curricula and target-based education.

Cross-national attraction and policy borrowing

A vast range of policy borrowing literature exists within the comparative education field, which has long acknowledged the difficult and complex nature of policy transfer (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006). Beech (2006) documented the long-standing debate surrounding the possibility of education policy transfer. He cites the commonality between policy borrowing models. Firstly, a problem is identified locally. Then, foreign examples to remedy these problems are sought. Finally, the foreign model is adapted into the borrowing system (Beech, 2006). The process, which seemingly constitutes three simple steps, deceptively produces problems through its complexity (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006).

Policy transfer does not have a straightforward nature. Implementation occurs when a policy is "internalised" and "indigenised" by the distortion of the original feature. Thus, Phillips and Ochs (2004) have created a cycle of policy borrowing, which consists of four stages: cross-national attraction, decision, implementation, and internalisation/indigenisation. The cross-national attraction stage begins with impulses that spawn this attraction, such as internal dissatisfaction, political imperatives, or "negative external evaluation". "Negative external evaluation" often comes from large-scale international educational assessments such as the OECD's PISA (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 778). Therefore, countries dissatisfied with their performances in PISA feel the impetus to look to those more "successful" for educational ideas.

The second phase of policy borrowing can involve "quick fix" and "phony" decision-making (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780). "Quick fix" borrowing occurs in times of "immediate political necessity" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780). Noah (1984, p. 550) states that "The more urgent and intractable our educational problems seem to be, the more tempting becomes the notion of a 'quick fix'". The "phony" type of decision-making refers to interest in external education systems by politicians for immediate political impact (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780). Countries fall prey to quick fix and phony policy solutions when their education systems seem to fall short of expectations. Finland's top performance in PISA, and its strength of teachers and teacher education, tempts countries to implement policy in a quick fix and phony manner. After the implementation stage, the internalisation/indigenisation phase occurs. Phillips and Ochs (2004, pp. 780-781) also refer to this stage as the "domestication" of education policy, where the borrowed policy becomes part of the context of the borrower country's system.

Before PISA, little interest surrounded the Finnish education system (Sahlberg, 2007). However, owing to its performance in PISA, Finland's education system has become a popular travel destination for those observing how Finland created a high-performing education system (Sahlberg, 2007). This cross-national attraction has triggered an "educa-

tional pilgrimage" to Finland (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 163). Interestingly, while much literature has been published on the "Finland Phenomenon", and even more on the possibilities and pitfalls of policy borrowing, an exploration of the exporting country in the policy borrowing process has not occurred.

While cross-national attraction and policy borrowing has existed for some time (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006), the changes made by transnational organisations and international achievement studies has increased the scope of, interest in, and possibility of policy borrowing (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2006), and therefore policy migration. For example, Sahlberg (2009, 2011) highlights a development called the Global Educational Reform Movement, or GERM. This movement arose due to the realisation in the 1980s that education systems needed to have greater influence on economic and social progression (Sahlberg, 2011). The Education Reform Act of 1988 in England marks a turning point in international education policy, with the introduction of competition, school choice, and most significantly, the publicly released, comparative information of student achievement in the country (Sahlberg, 2011). Sahlberg (2011, p. 175) cites the launch of market values, competition, and standardisation in education, and the introduction of the now ubiquitous words "standards" and "accountability" within education policy.

This expansion of policies such as parental choice, competition, standards, and performance data in the 1990s "opened education export" (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 175). These exports occurred "without proper knowledge or skills on either side" (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 175). This "uncritical" transfer of policy (Crossley, 2000, p. 324) helped feed GERM. This GERM movement also relates to the aforementioned "quick fix" solutions for times of "immediate political necessity" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780). GERM has infected many education systems around the world. In contrast, Finland appears immune to this infestation, boasting high trust in education professionals and supporting creativity in teaching practice (Sahlberg, 2011). A paradox of "pedagogical conservatism" coexisting with trust and creativity remains a salient and unique feature of Finnish education (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 182). Similarly, the *normaalikoulu* actually has its roots in the mid-19th century. Ironically, this vestige of a centuries-old teacher education system has begun to influence education policy of the future.

An added dimension to policy borrowing now exists: the development of models to guarantee, or at least facilitate, successful policy transfer (Beech, 2006). While much comparative education literature dedicates itself to the models of policy borrowing (e.g. Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Rappleye, 2006), a gap exists in models for policy export. Beech (2006) asserts that the 1960s brought about the search for policy transfer models. Perhaps the second decade of the new millennium can mark a new era of models for policy export. Thus, this article discusses the possibilities for education policy migration and for critically-informed policy export.

Setting

This empirical study focused on Finnish teacher education, and, specifically, the ability to transfer the university training school, or *normaalikoulu*, into another educational context. The data was gathered from one Finnish university's teacher education programme and teacher training school.

As stated previously, research attributes Finnish PISA success to the high quality of Finnish teachers and the rigour of Finnish teacher education (Chung, 2009; OECD, 2010). Teaching has proved an extremely popular profession in the country, and those aspiring towards a teaching career must undergo a tough admission process (Chung, 2009). Typical admission rates to teacher education programmes hover around 10% of the applicant pool (Chung, 2009; Raiker, 2011). The university used for this empirical study admits 6% of its students to education programmes (Raiker, 2011). Primary teaching courses are the most selective. Those wanting to become subject teachers for lower or upper-secondary school have the option of "direct selection", meaning the university accepts them for both their subject and for teacher education. This also indicates that the applicant must pass two sets of rigorous entrance examinations. A university course lasts for five years, including a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and teaching practice, which is included in the programme credit distribution. A degree includes research conducted by students at both the undergraduate and Master's level in the form of a thesis.

A teaching degree in Finland covers subject education, educational sciences, and teaching practice. Primary teaching students have more teaching practice, spread out throughout the five-year programme. Subject teaching candidates typically study their subject and pedagogy, and undertake their teaching practice during their fourth year. The students mainly carry out their teaching practice at the *normaalikoulu*. Students also undertake some of their teaching practice outside of the *normaalikoulu* setting. It is up to the students to find such placements; however, this particular university, where the empirical data was gathered, does have a standing partnership with a "field school" in the area.

This *normaalikoulu* differs from a municipality school as it receives its funding through the university. The head teachers and teachers are employed as part of the university. Teachers within the *normaalikoulu* elect the head teachers from within the school, and they serve as head for six years. Teachers at the *normaalikoulu* must have a Master's degree, teaching qualification, and a minimum of two years of experience. Salaries are higher than average, in order to accommodate extra responsibility. Many have a degree higher than the minimum Master's degree, whether a PhD or a Licentiate degree. Teachers' highest priority at these schools must be the training of future teachers.

Methods

This paper implements qualitative methodology, with the empirical findings coming from a larger research project focusing on the Finnish teacher education model. The research

explores the export possibilities of Finnish teacher education, from the view of one university. This study uses semi-structured interviews (Drever, 1995; Kvale, 1996) with student teachers, mentor teachers, head teachers, lecturers, education consultants, and education professors, documenting their perspectives on the export possibilities of Finnish education.

The sample itself included interviews with eighteen participants, which included four professors of education, one education consultant, four university lecturers, one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, one mentor teacher, one teacher, one international liaison (a qualified teacher), and four student teachers. The participants were chosen according to two sampling styles: purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Cohen et al., 2007). Earlier research in Finland had established connections with previous interviewees who participated again in this research. Those interviewees gave names of colleagues who would be helpful in this study, indicating snowball sampling (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen & Manion, 1994). Furthermore, the university helped make connections with appropriate staff members, thus involving purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2007).

Ethical issues were considered carefully, and all interviewees were assured of their confidentiality in the research process (Cohen et al., 2007). Pseudonyms are used in place of proper names (Thomas, 2009). The interviews were recorded; all of the interviewees gave permission to do so. All interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, with the exception of one group interview. Most were held in the participants' offices, or in the absence of an office, a classroom or a common space within the school or the university. All eighteen participants were asked about the possibilities of education policy transfer from Finland, the strengths and weaknesses of teacher education, including the teacher training school, and actual transfer of the training school policy to another country.

The data was analysed with the use of grounded theory (Cohen et al., 2007; Punch, 2009), which allowed for data to emerge and to give rise to subsequent theories. These theories and findings rose out of the systematic collection of the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2007).

Findings

The findings of this empirical study exploring Finnish education export are presented in terms of the perspective of Finnish educationalists. The participants were asked about their opinions on the export and migration of Finnish education, focusing upon Finnish teacher education and in particular the university training school.

Export and migration

Export remained a salient theme throughout interviews pertaining to Finnish education policy. Päivi, a mentor teacher at the *normaalikoulu,* cited how Finnish ministers "would like to promote marketing Finnish school systems abroad". She believed "we should have taken the advantage of our PISA results earlier. We have had high results for the past ten

years or so". This current foray into Finnish educational export is rather delayed, as the first PISA scores were released in 2001. Professor Karppinen discussed the notion of Finnish education export, citing how within the university, the idea of creating models of Finnish education for other countries already exists. He stated, "We need to have some clear programme which we can offer, and then discuss with countries. Are they interested to have this kind of programme, to have, for example, better teachers […]? We should first make some clear products, modules and then offer them to other countries." He cited a lack of funding to take this vision through. While discussion of export within the University as well as the Ministry of Education exists, the actual funding and production of these exportable products remains the problem.

Professor Virtanen quickly noted that educational exports do not resemble exports in a manufacturing sense: "In a traditional sense I don't think there will be a lot of that type of export, that we take some models here, and then put it in a package and the address and send". He envisioned it more as developing the Finnish expertise and experience to make exportable educational products: "We have already more expertise and experience to develop the kind of products that can be exported, maybe putting, for instance, putting [our] special education in some package that can be sold". Rather than export in the traditional sense, Finland and the exporting country should develop the project together, jointly. Professor Virtanen stated:

> If we manage to develop that kind of products [...], where we are developing together with people and groups in some other countries, it's some kind of joint product […] The idea is that we go to help and then in five years or ten years we make ourselves unnecessary there, then the system can develop by itself. I think that's […] a possibility, and that is our strength, that we are able to think in that way. But how to make it a product in an economical sense, and how to make it realistic, how to organise it, how to make it work in practice, well [… we are] trying to do that.

This joining and sharing of ideas, in this vision, follows the indigenisation phase of Phillips and Ochs' (2004) policy borrowing model.

Interestingly, Professor Rantala stated, "the quality of education system cannot exceed the quality of the teachers". He also said, "It has been little by little we have noticed that education might be our export product". These two statements show the importance of high-quality teachers, and the potential for exporting one of Finland's top educational strengths. Teacher education, then, must be the heart of any educational reform. Professor Rantala said:

> [Teacher education …] is a major issue in developing the whole school […] if you could select the teachers and improve their salary and social status, I would say that that is one of the major issues, that more talented persons could get into teaching as a career. The school system itself, well, better teachers and better reflecting teachers, I would say, with better content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge […] is a key issue in developing the schools.

Professor Rantala's opinions, therefore, show that the export of teacher education would be an excellent product.

The interest in exporting Finnish education raises the question of migration of education policy. Could the export of Finnish education mark a "second wave", so to speak, of educational migration, in order to combat Sahlberg's (2011) GERM movement? The possibility depends on the packaging of the export. On one hand, the importance of culture and national context impedes the successful implantation of education policy. Exporting education policy is not a new idea. For example, Tobin et al. (2009, p. 233) cite the difficulty in transporting the much-admired Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education away from its Italian context: "What makes Reggio Emilia's system of childcare and education so special is the same thing that makes Italian wines and cheeses so special – each reflects the locale where it is made". Therefore, transporting the Reggio Emilia system elsewhere strips it of the ideals of the town itself, which are not necessarily compatible with most alternate or opposing political ideologies (ibid.). The immense interest in Reggio Emilia worldwide and difficulty of successfully implementing the Reggio Emilia approach abroad, according to Tobin et al. (2009) illustrate the problematic nature of removing education from its cultural, historical, and societal context.

On the other hand, Tobin et al. (2009) state that educational policies and practice that move from one country to another, successfully, either have been intentionally designed in a context-free manner, or have been "stripped" of their local context. International assessments could aid the design of such education policies. This positivist view of the world encourages measurement of education, not only nationally, but also internationally. Therefore, this scientific perspective allows educational experts to isolate "best practice" (Kamens & McNeely, 2009, p. 11). The search for "best practice" has led to the increased interest in international surveys, in order to improve education achievement in another system (Kamens & McNeely, 2009, p. 11). When identified, "best practice" is "distilled" into an easily transferable "tool kit" for practical use (Kamens & McNeely, 2009, p. 12). This "distilled" form remains far from its original context (Kamens & McNeely, 2009, p. 12). If the best practice of the Finnish *normaalikoulu* were distilled into a tool kit, then it would be feasible for the practice to transfer successfully into another context. In other words, "decontextualization" (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 239) is needed to implement borrowed policy successfully. Professor Virtanen spoke of exporting small units of Finnish education. He suggested that educational exports from Finland must be in narrow, specific areas. Rather than borrowing an entire education system, a narrow, specific policy would have a better chance of indigenisation into the borrowing system. Professor Virtanen states:

> It means we must be able to find some very specific areas like special education or guidance and counselling policy, that is one of the strengths that is of interest, and work on that area, so quite narrow area. Or, find different kinds of ways to organise it, so it is based really on joining and sharing ideas and ways of teaching and working as equal partners, not as traditional selling products, knowing I have a good product and selling it to some other.

Tobin et al. (2009) argue that approaches to education can fall into two categories, implicit or self-consciously constructed. The implicit systems reflect a "deep cultural logic"

(Tobin et al., 2009, p. 239). A constructed education system often has a pioneering author, such as Maria Montessori, and textbooks and training manuals (Tobin et al., 2009). In the absence of textbooks and training manuals, they have "a systematic approach to popularizing and marketing their program" (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 239). Furthermore, these "constructed systems can travel abroad because they are readily packaged" (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 239). One could argue, then, if elements of Finnish education are packaged and "marketed" in such a manner, then export and migration of the policy could occur easily. However, Raiker (2011, pp. 3-4) spoke of the reinforcement of Finnish identity in Finnish education, and the "national vision of Finnish culture" which "drives compulsory education". Raiker alludes to the education system's role in raising the next generation of Finns, therefore rendering most of Finnish education difficult to borrow.

Thus, the potential export of Finnish teacher education, according to arguments by Tobin et al. (2009) and Raiker (2011), depends on the packaging of the product and the ability of the product to distance itself from national values. The next section discusses the potential, or lack thereof, of borrowing Finnish teacher education.

Possibility of the export and migration of Finnish teacher education

The discussion of the export and migration of Finnish education naturally leads to the debate of policy borrowing. As stated previously, comparative education scholars (e.g. Noah, Phillips, Crossley) have long warned of the difficulty in policy transfer. "Transplantation is a difficult art, and those who wish to benefit from the experience of other nations will find in comparative studies a most useful set of cautions, as well as some modest encouragement" (Noah, 1984, p. 56). Phillips and Ochs' (2004) aforementioned policy borrowing model does show the possibilities of critical, informed borrowing. The previous section of this article has suggested that borrowing smaller elements of Finnish teacher education could prove beneficial. Upon closer inspection, borrowing specific elements and incorporating them could align with the "indigenisation" model of policy borrowing (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 779). On the other hand, haphazardly transferring some elements and not others could cause contradiction within the borrowing education system. It depends on the aforementioned packaging of the borrowed export, whether "distilled" into a "tool kit" (Kamens & McNeely, 2009, p. 12), ready for indigenisation, or if the policy still reflects a "deep cultural logic" (Tobin et al., 2009, p. 239), unable to assimilate to a disparate system.

When asked about the transfer of a smaller unit of Finnish teacher education, many participants believed the *normaalikoulu* was borrowable, as it lacks many cultural constraints. For example, Päivi, the mentor teacher, referring to the transferability of the model, stated that "To some extent, why not? […] It is not so culture specific." Similarly, Professor Virtanen also thought the model, a "clever idea", is borrowable. He claimed, "this *normaalikoulu* […] is very much in the interest in many countries", but acknowl-

edges that it has its own problems. Interviewees, especially teacher trainees, overwhelmingly said that the school is not "normal", and they wanted to have more "real" experiences. Finland struggles with the *normaalikoulu's* "abnormality", but overall, the idea, according to Professor Virtanen, should work in other contexts. Similarly, Professor Karppinen stated, "education is always culturally bound", but the *normaalikoulu* is "definitely […] one area that can be applied in many countries." Professor Siltonen said, "I don't think it is possible or even desirable to just copy a system and put it elsewhere […] the values in education are important in dictating what kind of practical solutions to have, but the values behind your educational system of course depend on the values of the society as a whole". However, when asked about the borrowability of the *normaalikoulu* model, she said, "sure, I think it could […] I see it as a practical solution, and that practical solution is something you can borrow [*sic*] to other countries".

Interestingly, Dr Brown, an independent consultant from Canada, gave another perspective on the matter, coming from a government view. "Policy mature" countries, she believed, do not and will not completely overhaul their established, mature education systems; rather, these countries look for specific elements and "indigenise" them (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 779), into the existing "home" system. Small elements, she believed, transfer easily. One could argue that a "small element" such as a teacher training school could fit in another context. She argues that policy mature countries do not borrow; rather, they implement "policy learning", where governments look to enhance their policy mature education system. Policy learning ties "policy experimentation" and "policy experience" to educational outcomes. PISA aids policy learning as it allows governments to see concrete results in the form of educational outcomes. Policy learning is not copying or borrowing, but rather internalising an idea and applying it to existing policy, in order to work within the home context. Dr Brown's assertions align well to Phillips and Ochs' (2004, p. 779) "internalisation" and "indigenisation" idea, and suggest that a small element such as the *normaalikoulu* could successfully domesticise in another education system.

In contrast, some interviewees thought that a *normaalikoulu* system had limited borrowing potential. For example, Lecturer Raikkonen stated how, "I think in theory, at least in theory, it's possible". Nevertheless, he does consider the importance of culture, even in a smaller policy area such as teacher education, as many comparative education theorists suggest. He said, "The idea, the structure is possible to transfer, but not the school from our culture to another culture, because it is not a separated, isolated island". Similarly, Lecturer Huopio did not think changing teacher education would benefit another education system. He said, "The problem is that all these practices are so integrated with other practices in society. To change one thing very often requires changing many things at the same time". In Kemmis and Heikkinen's (2012, p. 157) ecology analogy, the "ecologies of practice" highlight the "interdependence among particular clusters of practice", such as teacher education; therefore, "practices exist in ecological relationships with one another and in whole ecosystems of interrelated practices". In other words, even a small

practice such as a teacher training school exists in a wider ecosystem of teacher education and school culture. According to this model, the *normaalikoulu* could not survive within another educational ecosystem, especially one affected by GERM.

Discussion

Beech (2006) documented the long-standing debate surrounding the possibility of education policy transfer. While this debate still rages on to this day, an added dimension exists: the development of models to guarantee, or at least facilitate, successful policy transfer (Beech, 2006). Ochs (2006) documented successful policy borrowing from Switzerland and Germany to the Barking and Dagenham area in London. This transfer was successful for these reasons:

- A strong commitment to improving the school system
- Strong key partnerships to provide support in the process
- Awareness of the challenges at hand when implementing a foreign system into one's own
- Recognising that the process would require continuous commitment and repetition
- Considering the contexts of both countries throughout the policy borrowing stages

Notably, Ochs' first point in successful policy transfer highlights the partnerships between the borrowing and lending contexts. This echoes Professor Virtanen's earlier assertions, that of educational export as a joint venture. To reiterate, he said, "If we manage to develop that kind of products [...], where we are developing together with people and groups in some other countries, it's some kind of joint product […] The idea is that we go to help and then in five years or ten years we make ourselves unnecessary there, then the system can develop by itself." He advocates Finnish education export as a joint product in order to ensure policy integrity and indigenisation. Furthermore, a distilled version of an exported policy allows for the view of educational practices and structure as "neutral technologies", adaptable into different contexts (Beech, 2006, p. 4).

However, this raises the question: how do we measure successful policy transfer? Does this assessment process incorporate the power of transnational organisations? Will the success of policy export depend on PISA scores? Would the measurement of export success ultimately feed more education systems into the GERM movement? Or, will the export of Finnish education policy promote this aforementioned second wave of policy export, an antidote to GERM. In this case, what defines a "good" education system and improvement through policy export?

Unfortunately, policy transfer seemingly cannot exist separate from political drama. Rappleye (2006, p. 237) argues that "policy borrowing is by definition a highly *political* process", referring to an "'edu-political' chess match" (Rappleye, 2006, p. 238). In fact, the 2010 Schools White Paper explicitly uses PISA as a measuring tool. The document opens citing the decline of the United Kingdom from the 2000 to 2006 surveys (DfE,

2010). This policy document aims to tackle this decline by looking at more successful systems around the world, including Finland. Halpin and Troyna (1995) cite how politicians have more interest in a borrowed policy's political power than in the actual implications on the home education system. Therefore, in this view, policies have less significance than the political discourse they generate (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). Halpin and Troyna (1995, p. 308) state how policy borrowing "has more to do with form than content". Similarly, Yore et al. (2010) cite that myth can influence policy more than science. They argue that impatient politicians looking for change succumb to myth rather than research. This suggests that myths generated by PISA have led to policy reform. Therefore, it becomes less likely that research actually informs policy change (Yore et al. 2010). In fact, policymakers have a tendency to "formulate, announce, and implement policy than encourage research engagement that could retrospectively support the policy" (Yore et al., 2010, p. 597). Here PISA is used as a political tool to justify political actions and policy change. Instead of evidence-based policy change, it is "policy-based evidence-making" (Yore et al., 2010, p. 597). This dangerous reversal of policy protocol illustrates the lack of informed policy making, and the "phony" and "quick fix" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 780) decisions made by politicians. If, in fact, the Schools White Paper of 2010 used the model of Finnish teaching schools for political power rather than for potential effect on the education system, then the policy does not have a chance at indigenising and improving the education system. The migration of policy, then, initiated under phony reasons, would not transfer to hospitable conditions.

New possibilities of policy export and this shift of policymaking from the national to transnational level indicates that the migration of education policy may escalate in future years, and even become a viable industry for a country such as Finland. Even now, universities charge money for "PISA tourists" looking for educational inspiration. Comparative education, then, must start exploring even more deeply the consequences, both positive and negative, of transnational policy formation. How will this change education, and does this contribute to the GERM movement or can this contradict it? As Rappleye (2006) stated, globalisation complicates educational transfer theory, and related to this, policy migration. The interest in exporting Finnish education, from both the borrowers and lenders, creates a new dimension to the policy borrowing debate: that of successful models of educational export.

Conclusion

The OECD's PISA and Finland's positive PISA results have had a significant impact on education policy. Most recently, countries have looked at the possibility of transferring Finnish teacher education. This article explored the possibility of Finnish teacher education as an export product. Factors such as globalisation and the power of transnational organisations have added to the impetus for policy transfer. It could be argued that the international arena now has more influence on education and educational policy than the

nation-state. The measurement of education, both at the nation-state level and the international level, leads to the "faming" and "shaming" of successful and less-than-successful education systems. Thus, educational solutions can be packaged in order to combat educational weaknesses and failures. Economic factors drive education policy; education is now a global edu-business.

In addition, transnational organisations, such as the OECD, now hold much power in terms of education policy. The standards set by the OECD now signal the measurement of successful education systems. For example, PISA has become an indicator of education quality and efficiency. Some educational decision-making has moved to the transnational level, and subsequently, policy borrowing has evolved as well. PISA's influence has been so strong that some countries have succumbed to policy change due to PISA-induced pressure. This aligns with the Global Education Reform Movement, or GERM, which spreads educational characteristics such as testing and accountability around the world. Thus, the OECD and PISA have put forth an educational paradox: while the OECD promotes Finland-inspired, anti-GERM education, PISA forces countries to adopt GERM-based education policy. Finland has remained resistant to GERM.

Although policy borrowing theory has long warned about the difficulties in successful transfer, interest in borrowing Finnish education policy has increased over the years, due to high PISA outcomes. Thus, countries have an interest in importing products from Finland, such as teacher education, and more specifically, the teacher training school. Although delayed, as the first top outcomes in PISA were released in 2001, Finland is now looking into exporting its products and models to other countries. The process has already begun. Research suggests that successful transfer exists when the exportable product has been stripped of context and distilled into a tool kit. Thus, the success of a Finnish export depends on the packaging. Most participants in this study suggest that the *normaalikoulu* is not too culturally bound to be borrowable, but others argue that the Finnish university training school cannot exist outside of its own ecosystem.

This article concludes that the delayed export of Finnish education, more specifically, the teacher training school, can occur if implemented with no political pressure, if distilled from its original context, if indigenised into the borrowing context, and if the exported product is seen as a joint endeavour between the borrowing and lending nations. Is the interest in Finnish teacher education an indication of a new, delayed global edu-business to come, or is it an extension of a burgeoning global edu-business of Finnish education? The Finns currently embrace the very lucrative business of handling Finnish education as a commercial product, due to the vast amount of PISA tourists. If the export and transfer of the Finnish teacher training school is implemented faithfully under the suggested guidelines, then this could possibly lead to educational improvement elsewhere. However, if the exports are packaged and implemented in an uncritical manner and for quick fix solutions, then this very successful feature of Finnish education would not survive outside of its ecosystem.

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