



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

A converging pedagogy in the developing world? Insights from Uganda and Turkey

Kosar Altinyelken, H.

Publication date

2012

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Global education policy and international development: new agendas, issues and policies

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

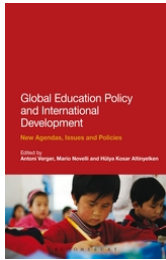
Kosar Altinyelken, H. (2012). A converging pedagogy in the developing world? Insights from Uganda and Turkey. In A. Verger, M. Novelli, & H. Kosar Altinyelken (Eds.), *Global education policy and international development: new agendas, issues and policies* (pp. 201-221). Bloomsbury.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.



**Global Education Policy and International Development
New Agendas, Issues and Policies**
Antoni Verger, Mario Novelli and Hülya Kosar Altinyelken (eds)
Bloomsbury Academic 2012
Bloomsbury open access

Chapter DOI 10.5040/9781472544575.ch-010

Page range 201–222

Chapter 10. A Converging Pedagogy in the Developing World? Insights from Uganda and Turkey

Hülya Kosa Altinyelken

Introduction

In recent decades, school pedagogy has assumed central importance in education reforms that are designed to enhance the quality of education. It has been increasingly linked to economic growth, international competitiveness (Alexander 2008) and political democratisation (Tabulawa 2003). Particularly after the 1990s, the global political discourse on pedagogy has been progressively shaped by approaches that are based on constructivism. Such approaches have become 'part of a discursive repertoire of international rights and quality education' (Chisholm *et al.* 2008, p. 4). Donor agencies have also proven influential in placing the notions of constructivism on the international reform agenda (Tabulawa 2003; Ginsburg *et al.* 2008). Indeed, an overview of policy documents by influential international organisations reveals that skills-based and learner-centred curricula have increasingly become the default position internationally.

Over the years, constructivism has largely influenced educational reforms in low-income countries as many have endorsed reform programmes that are couched in the rhetoric of constructivism. It has been characterized differently in diverse contexts as student-centred pedagogy (SCP), child-centred pedagogy (CCP), learner-centred pedagogy, active learning or collaborative learning. By the late twentieth century, reforms introducing CCP, student participation, democracy in the classroom, hands-on learning and cooperative learning groups have become globally ubiquitous (Anderson-Levitt 2003). Constructivism has been 'increasingly taken for granted as part of notions of educational quality' (Ginsburg *et al.* 2008, 106).

There are several examples of countries endorsing such pedagogical reforms in recent history. In Asia, examples include China (Carney 2008; Dello-Iacovo 2009), Russia (Schweisfurth 2002), Kyrgyzstan (Price-Rom *et al.* 2009) and Taiwan (Yang *et al.* 2008); in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa (Nykiel-Herbert 2004), Botswana (Tabulawa 2003), Namibia (O'Sullivan 2004; Chisholm *et al.* 2008), Ethiopia (Serbessa 2006), Malawi (Croft 2002) and Tanzania (Barrett 2007); in the Middle East, Egypt (Ginsburg *et al.* 2008) and Jordan (Roggemann *et al.* 2009); and in Latin America, Brazil (Luschei 2004), Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador (de Baessa *et al.* 2002).

The spread of pedagogical approaches based on constructivism has rekindled the debate on globalization and curriculum, as scholars enquired whether convergence around discourses and national education policies has resulted in the convergence of educational practices around the world (Anderson-Levitt 2003, 2008; Carson 2009). In other words, has the convergence at the level of global policy talk on pedagogy led to convergence at the classroom level? And to what extent have the global and the official national discourses on pedagogy reshaped teaching and learning practices in classrooms? This chapter aims to reflect on such questions and seeks to provide an empirical examination of the practice of global education policy by focusing on the implementation of pedagogical reforms in two countries, namely, Uganda and Turkey.

These two countries are similar in terms of undergoing major curriculum review processes within similar timeframes and scope, and for being 'late adopters' of pedagogical approaches couched in the rhetoric of constructivism, defined as CCP in Uganda and SCP in Turkey (CCP shall be used to refer to both of them throughout the chapter.) However, they differ significantly in many other ways, including their geographical size, population, history, political economy, donor involvement and education system. Choosing cases that are very different from one other is considered appropriate, since the chapter is aimed at analysing how context (structural aspects) and agents (teachers) mediate 'global' policies, and what kind of indigenized implementation profiles emerge as such policies are implemented at school level. In other words, the nature and type of pedagogical reforms that Uganda and Turkey have recently experienced offer sufficient similarities to warrant comparison, with large differences to help highlight the influence of contextual factors and teacher agency¹¹.

Constructivism

Constructivism is not a pedagogical approach but a theory regarding how people learn. It associates knowledge directly with individual learners and considers it to be the product of students' activities. Through processes of assimilation and accommodation, knowledge is constructed by students as they relate the new information to their already existing cognitive structures (Bruer 1993). In other words, learning is conceived as 'an active process in which learners are active sense-makers who seek to build coherent and organized knowledge' (Mayer 2004, p. 14). Accordingly, knowledge is created by undergoing, researching and actively experiencing reality. Since learning is perceived as a self-regulated activity, emphasis is placed on providing students with ample opportunities for discovery and the interpretation of events. Learning to learn is perceived to be as important as mastering content. The role of teachers in this context is mainly geared toward stimulating and coaching students in their learning activities.

New paradigms of learning and teaching based on the principles of constructivism are characterized by minimal teacher lecturing or direct transmission of factual knowledge, individual and small-group activities, frequent student questions, and extensive dialogue among students (Leu *et al.* 2006). Since learning is viewed as a process during which students must be active, passive media such as books, lectures and presentations are often classified as non-constructivist teaching, whereas active media such as group discussions, hands-on learning and interactive games are classified as constructivist teaching (Mayer 2004).

The global diffusion of CCP

Why do different countries around the world seem to be engaging in a similar dialogue on how pedagogy should be reformed? Why are official discourses converging around the same pedagogical model? Different and often competing answers have been provided to these questions. According to modernisation theorists, countries borrow educational reforms from elsewhere because they are superior. The emerging global curriculum (and the pedagogical approach as an integral part of the curriculum) is a response to the demands of globalized economies and knowledge societies (Anderson-Levitt 2008). Pedagogical approaches based on constructivism have become popular since they represent the best way of organising teaching and learning in schools in the contemporary world. However, the outcomes of such pedagogies are contested, or the results are perceived as inconclusive in many developed countries where these pedagogies had a better chance of being implemented because of resource availability, smaller class sizes and improved teacher training (Alexander 2001; Gauthier *et al.* 2004; Mayer 2004; UNESCO 2005).

A second view is proposed by world culture theorists. According to them, countries have more or less freely adopted a global culture of schooling because a set of ideas and practices are perceived as the best and the most modern way, even though they may not actually be the best way to run schools. In other words, nations adopt ideas not because they are truly better, but because policymakers perceive them as modern, progressive and inevitable (Meyer *et al.* 2000). For instance, constructivism is perceived as effective in improving learning achievements and preparing children and young people for the labour market. In the current globalized, increasingly competitive knowledge economy, the business community demands employees who think creatively, adapt flexibly to new work demands, identify and solve problems, and cooperate with colleagues in effective ways to create complex products (Windschitl 2002).

The assumption that constructivist learning environments are superior in developing and reinforcing such skills and competencies therefore appears to have contributed to its greater appeal. Indeed, research has shown that approaches rooted in constructivism have been endorsed in many countries on the assumption that such approaches would better prepare workers for the global economy, in which 'the new rules of wealth creation are replacing the logic of Fordist mass production with new "knowledge-based" systems of flexible production' (Ball 1998, p. 120). Moreover, constructivism is associated with educating citizens who would effectively participate in democratic politics (Ginsburg 2009), and with creating more capable consumers through education.

The two theories presented above assume that countries import education policies more or less voluntarily, and they downplay the power asymmetries among them. Furthermore, the world culture theory, due to its structuralist ontology, fails to recognize the role of particular international actors who have been involved in disseminating such pedagogies in different parts of the world. These include bilateral organisations (e.g. DANIDA and USAID), international organisations (e.g. the World Bank and UNICEF), or other agencies (e.g. the Aga Khan Foundation and some international NGOs) that had different motives and agendas in promoting CCP.

The world system theory, in contrast, considers power central to the discussion. Here, convergence represents power, rather than progress. Hence, if pedagogical practices are converging around the world (at least in the official curricula), it is because a certain pedagogical approach is in the interests of powerful states or international organisations (Guthrie 1990; Tabulawa 2003; Carney 2008). These perspectives emphasize imposition or coercion as educational transfer mechanisms, and highlight the role of international aid agencies (such as USAID) as major players that have contributed to the spread of constructivism by advocating it as a prescription through educational projects and consultancies they funded (Tabulawa 2003). Although aid agencies frame their interest by focusing on the assumed effectiveness of constructivism in improving learning outcomes, this perspective points to a hidden agenda which is disguised as 'better' teaching. According to this view, the efficacy of constructivism lies in its political and ideological nature. Although the world system theory captures some of the complexities ignored by the world culture theory, it overemphasizes the role of international actors, disregards the agency of the recipient countries, and overstates imposition and coercion as policy transfer mechanisms.

Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi underlines the importance of the 'politics' and 'economics' of educational borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi 2010). The politics of educational transfer is relevant for both the lender and the borrower, and implies political reasons for exporting and disseminating specific education policies or reforms (e.g. by donor agencies, NGOs and consultants), as well as political motives at the local level for importing a set of education reforms. Steiner-Khamsi argues that borrowing can work as a means to de-contextualize and de-territorialize educational reforms that are contested in a given country (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.* 2000; Steiner-Khamsi 2004). She suggests that 'borrowing does not occur because reforms from elsewhere are better, but because the very act of borrowing has a salutary effect on domestic policy conflict' (Steiner-Khamsi 2006, p. 671). The economics of policy borrowing and lending, on the other hand, points to the economic reasons for borrowing a specific education reform. The economics of policy borrowing is particularly salient for low-income countries that are dependent on external aid.

Indeed, the time has come for a specific reform when international funding for implementing that particular reform is secured (Steiner-Khamsi 2006). The economics of policy lending and borrowing also helps to explain why education reforms in low-income countries increasingly bear a resemblance to those in developed countries.

Educational transfer

Why and how are Western pedagogies imported?

The rationale

In both Turkey and Uganda, the new pedagogies were imported within the framework of improving the quality of education, and pedagogical renewal constituted an integral part of broader curriculum review and change processes. While adopting CCP, both countries have also instigated changes in curriculum content and student assessment.

In Uganda, following a one-year pilot phase, the Thematic Curriculum for primary schools was implemented nationwide in February 2007 (NCDC 2006a). Likewise, in Turkey, Curriculum 2004 was piloted for a year in a select number of schools and has been implemented nationwide since September 2005 (Educational Reform Initiative 2005). In Uganda, the content has been reorganized according to a number of thematic areas, and in Turkey, the content load has been reduced and a thematic approach has been considered in content organisation. Both curricula have adopted a competency-based approach as opposed to the traditional knowledge-based curriculum approach, and have emphasized the development of specific competencies and skills. In terms of student assessment, both countries attempted to move beyond testing, and adopted continuous assessment.

The official account as to why new pedagogies are adopted points to dissatisfaction with student learning achievements, the inefficiency of the education system, and the urge to restructure pedagogical practices in line with the imperatives of the knowledge-based economy. In Uganda, the primary concern is related to the very low achievement levels in literacy and numeracy (UNEB 2005) and the inefficiencies of the system as indicated by high drop-out and repetition rates (Read *et al.* 2005). CCP appears to have been embraced as an antidote to traditional teaching in the hope that learning achievements and competencies will consequently improve, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A literate and numerate population is seen as critical to economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

In Turkey, on the other hand, globalization, the knowledge-based economy, the EU membership process and harmonisation with the EU education system, the changing social and economic needs of Turkish society, concerns with low student motivation and disappointment with the results of Turkish students in international tests (particularly PISA) are highlighted as important motives. The new pedagogies that are based on constructivist principles are considered to be progressive and advanced, and viewed as the only alternative to the traditional teaching practices in both countries (see Altinyelken 2011). Furthermore, the discourses on the rationale for a new pedagogy reflect the primacy of economic considerations in both contexts. This does not come as a surprise, since such considerations have come to characterize many of the education policies initiated in different parts of the world.

Mechanisms

Both in Uganda and Turkey, the perceptions and the assumptions linking CCP with improved student learning and better preparation of workers for the contemporary labour markets appear to have strongly influenced education policymakers. Furthermore, Uganda exemplifies a country where the economics of education transfer have proven critical. The Ugandan education system is highly dependent on external assistance, as more than half the budget is paid for by donors (DGIS 2003). In turn, this creates 'a situation in which "voluntary policy transfer" is enmeshed with "coercive policy transfer"' (Dolowitz *et al.* 2000, p. 6). Donor aid is often accompanied by the lending of reform ideas, and even with the wholesale transfer of a comprehensive reform package formulated by the lender (Steiner-Khamsi 2006). Indeed, in Uganda, USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation have been actively involved in disseminating and institutionalising CCP in primary schools. For this purpose, they have developed and implemented projects in primary schools and teacher-training institutes in different parts of the country. According to some accounts, they have been very influential during the curriculum change process and in endorsing CCP as the official pedagogical approach in the new curriculum (see Altinyelken 2010).

The case of Turkey is interesting in terms of understanding both the politics and economics of educational transfer. The restructuring of the Turkish economy in line with neoliberalism was initiated in the 1980s, and the influence of such policies was also felt in the education system. However, an adaptation of the content of the primary school curriculum to the market was achieved by means of Curriculum 2004 (Akkaymak 2010). The curriculum change was initiated in the two years after the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power, so the adoption of CCP coincides with significant political change in Turkey. The political change is noteworthy in the sense that the JDP is the only party with Islamist roots that came to power as a single party in the history of the Republic. They had their own distinct vision of Turkish society and the education system. Even prior to their rise to power, they announced that they would bring about wide-ranging structural changes to the education system, which included changing the primary school curriculum. Since they were able to form a single-party government, they also had the political power to instigate fundamental changes (Akkaymak 2010).

In addition, accession to the EU has constituted another strong political motive in Turkey. In this sense, 'harmonisation' as a mechanism of policy transfer (Dale 1999) appears to have been influential in the adoption of CCP. Education, training and youth are considered to be the responsibilities of the Member States; however, the Community contributes to developing the quality of education in EU countries (Commission of the European Communities 2004). The Union's 2002 annual progress report considered the principles of the Turkish education system to be generally consistent with those of the EU. However, the report pointed towards reviewing the curricula and teaching methods as 'major issues to be addressed to increase the efficiency of the education system' (Commission of the European Communities 2002, p. 104).

Furthermore, the role of TÜSİAD (the largest corporate lobby in the country) merits attention. TÜSİAD has published a number of reports on education since the 1990s, urging governments to initiate major changes in the education system. Their reports have often formulated the role of education in economic terms, and suggested that the education system's primary responsibility is to produce an adequate workforce for the labour market. As early as in their 1990 Report, CCP was highlighted as the pedagogical model to be adopted, since it was considered to facilitate learning to learn and to develop important skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, research, and entrepreneurship (TÜSİAD 1990). Indeed, the role of TÜSİAD or the market in general has been considered strong in changing the curriculum and the pedagogical approach (Akkaymak 2010).

The economics of policy transfer is also highly relevant in the Turkish case, since the curriculum review was funded by the EU through the Support to Basic Education Programme. The programme was begun in 2002 and phased out in 2007, and had a budget of €100 million. The aim of the programme was to enhance the quality of formal and non-formal education and to increase access to education in Turkey (MONE 2008). The funding raised questions among teachers, as they enquired whether the funding was accompanied by the lending of educational ideas. Such a possibility was strongly refuted by policymakers, yet considered seriously by some of the teachers, headteachers and other stakeholders who shared their opinions on this topic. Indeed, both in Uganda and Turkey, policy-makers appeared rather defensive about any implications of outside imposition.

Main features of the new pedagogies

Despite their different characterisations, the new pedagogical approaches in Uganda and Turkey present several common features. The Ugandan curriculum interprets CCP as interaction among children, and between children and their teacher; emphasising classroom activities that enable children to handle materials and learn by doing; encouraging greater use of learning and teaching materials during lessons; advising that lessons be organized around the interests, concerns and abilities of children; and giving children the opportunity to influence the direction of the lessons. Active student participation in lessons, student talking time and group and pair work are emphasized. Learning by way of exploring, observing, experimenting and practicing are highlighted. In the Turkish curriculum, CCP is also defined along very similar lines as student participation, classroom activities, the use of learning aids, hands-on-learning and cooperative learning. Curriculum documents in both countries clearly suggest that the majority of lesson time should be spent on classroom activities. The four discernible differences between the two cases relate to the emphasis in Turkey on research activities, project-based learning (project and performance assignments), the use of ICT in classrooms and the integration of learning activities in and outside school, which anticipates and requires greater involvement of parents in education.

In both countries, the curriculum focuses on the development of specific competencies, and it is believed that CCP would prove highly conducive to this goal. The Ugandan curriculum focuses on the development of six life skills, which should occur in every theme and sub-theme. They include effective communication, critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking, problem-solving and self-esteem (NCDC 2006b). The Turkish curriculum, on the other hand, prioritizes the development of eight competencies: critical thinking, creativity, communication, problem-solving, research, using information technologies, entrepreneurship and language skills in Turkish (MONE 2005). The common features among the selected competencies are particularly notable, as four (out of six) competencies prioritized in the Ugandan curriculum are also prioritized in the new Turkish curriculum, i.e. critical thinking, problem-solving, creative thinking and effective communication skills. In addition, decision-making and self-esteem, two other competencies targeted by the Ugandan curriculum are also highlighted throughout revised educational programmes in Turkey. In both countries, CCP also aims at stimulating teamwork, cooperation and dialogue.

These findings support the idea that there is an international convergence in curriculum policy. The similarities in curriculum content (e.g. thematic organisation and the focus on the development of specific competencies), student evaluation (e.g. the introduction of alternative assessment methods that evaluate learning processes) and pedagogical approach (e.g. an emphasis on classroom activities, student participation, cooperation and hands-on-learning) support world culture theorists (Ramirez 2003). Does this evidence, then, point to a single global curriculum model or pedagogical approach? Indeed, it indicates the prevalence of pedagogical reforms couched in the rhetoric of constructivism, and convergence around how education policies are formulated in this area. However, since official curricula and mediated curricula tend to differ substantially, it cannot be taken as proof of convergence at the level of practice.

Teachers' views

Is CCP desirable?

CCP alters the role of teachers and appears to have wide-ranging implications for their profession. According to this pedagogical approach, teachers are expected to play facilitating roles within classrooms. Their primary role is no longer to convey knowledge but to mediate students' learning processes, and provide adequate guidance and support to these supposedly autonomous learners as they embark on constructing their knowledge. The students' role has become critical to educational processes since they are expected to assume much more responsibility in their learning and to be active in classroom processes. More importantly, it is now students who are required to direct learning (e.g. their interests, needs, learning styles, capacities, motivation and readiness), not teachers.

Since the old was critiqued and discredited in an effort to glorify and legitimize the new, having teachers at the centre was increasingly claimed to be authoritarian, uncaring, inefficient and morally wrong. Several teachers gave credit to this discourse both in Turkey and Uganda, arguing that education is about children, so they are the legitimate centres of schooling. The majority of them also believed that increased student active engagement in learning processes would lead to higher learning achievements and better outcomes in competencies and skills; and greater student involvement would improve motivation, concentration and attendance. A pedagogical approach based on the transmission model has been attacked in both countries to the extent that some Turkish teachers appeared uncomfortable during interviews when they disclosed that they occasionally lectured in their classes. Yet, as Alexander (2008, p. 79) insists: 'Transmission teaching is ubiquitous [...] because there are undoubtedly circumstances in which the transmission of information and skill is a defensible objective, in any context.' Both in Uganda and

Turkey, a polarized understanding of pedagogy was prevalent, not only among teachers but also among other key stakeholders. Such an approach appeared to have forced teachers to align with either the old teacher-centred (or subject-centred) approach, or with the new child/student-centred approach. Only a few dared to suggest that educationalists could instead move beyond such a dichotomous perspective.

In both countries, the proposed pedagogical approaches enjoyed a high level of receptiveness. In Uganda, CCP was viewed as the modern and progressive pedagogical approach. With the exception of one, none of the teachers appeared to be critical of the pedagogical approach and they seemed to shy away from questioning its underlying assumptions and main principles. It was simply perceived as a much superior pedagogical approach than traditional teaching. In other words, the Ugandan teachers did not question the desirability or the appropriateness of the new pedagogical approach, and appeared to welcome it as an example of Western best practice. However, they appeared to be overwhelmed by its implementation.

Likewise, CCP was perceived as the more advanced and progressive pedagogical approach by the majority of Turkish teachers. Some even explicitly noted that 'no one could be against it as no one can openly oppose development and improvement'. Furthermore, like Ugandan teachers, CCP was perceived by many as the only alternative to the traditional teaching methods that were criticized by policymakers, teachers and parents alike for being ineffective and boring. Some earlier studies have also identified overwhelmingly positive opinions and attitudes among Turkish teachers towards constructivism (Çınar *et al.* 2006; İşikoğlu *et al.* 2007).

Such a positive attitude was mainly based on the belief that CCP was the dominant pedagogical approach in schools across Western Europe. The West was viewed as advanced, developed, rich and successful. Implicit assumptions were made about the link between Europe's level of development and school pedagogy. Although research studies have not established a clear link between economic development and teaching and learning approaches (Alexander 2008), teachers as well as policymakers believed that CCP could potentially stimulate economic development and boost the competitiveness of the Turkish economy. Adopting a Western 'best practice' was also deemed to be logical and practical. After all, in the past three centuries, Turkey has often turned to the West to modernize and reform its military, legal, economic, political or educational system (Ulusoy 2009). In fact, teachers' accounts in both countries suggest that the West was viewed as the 'reference society' (Schriewer *et al.* 2004). Hence the pedagogical approach the Westerners might be using had credibility, legitimacy, and enjoyed a certain reputation.

Nevertheless, Turkish teachers' accounts are not so uniform, as strong criticism was also voiced by them. Indeed, some teachers expressed explicit resentment at and frustration with trying out foreign ideas. These teachers believed that educational ideas might work well in the countries of origin, but might fail when they were transplanted into new contexts. In this respect, teachers also pointed out that Turkish society is very different to Western European societies with regard to its vast socio-economic disparities between urban and rural citizens, the competitiveness of the education system, the hierarchical nature of relationships that involve an element of authority, the dynamics of parent-child relationships, the status attached to having a university degree, parental involvement in education, and so on.

Classroom practices

A case for convergence or divergence?

An examination of how the new pedagogical approaches imported from the West were re-contextualized and adapted locally in Uganda and Turkey reveals convergence at a superficial level around new rituals and practices, such as greater efforts to employ learning aids, or to involve children during lessons. However, the findings point more strongly to the persistence of divergences across nations. Divergence was not only manifest when the implementation profiles of the two countries were compared, but was also persistent when schools within a country or even classrooms within a school were compared. In other words, significant differences across schools and classrooms were noted as reform practices were embraced unevenly, interpreted differently and adaptations to classroom realities and student backgrounds have given rise to distinct implementation practices.

An overview of implementation profiles in Uganda and Turkey points to differing as well as some common features. In Uganda, the three most common indicators of change in classrooms included student talking time, the use of learning materials and group seating arrangements. However, these changes were often formalistic and interpreted differently from the manner intended by policymakers. For instance, student participation was regularly praised by teachers, and has become a buzzword among them. Although teachers reported increased student talking time, students were observed during classroom observations as giving answers in chorus to teachers' questions. The lessons were often dominated by teachers' questions, which were limited to basic information recall, requiring one- or two-word answers. Likewise, a formalistic adoption of group work was observed in classes visited in Uganda. Studies in other Sub-Saharan African countries have shown that changes in seating arrangements were the first – and in many cases the only – sign that teachers were implementing CCP (Nykiel-Herbert 2004). In the majority of Ugandan classrooms, children were seated in very large groups (up to 30 students in one group) and conducting meaningful learning activities proved difficult in such large groups. Furthermore, singing was a very common practice in Ugandan classrooms, as in several other Sub-Saharan African countries (Croft 2002). It was often used as a strategy to separate learning areas, to introduce children to new themes, and to improve their motivation and concentration.

In Turkey, as in Uganda, student talking time and the use of aids were common indicators of change. However, unlike Uganda, there was also much emphasis placed on classroom activities, the use of ICT, project, performance and research assignments. During lessons, teachers devoted the greater part of lesson time to activities listed in student workbooks. The activities were varied, and needed to be carried out individually, in pairs, or in groups. Teachers suggested that the noise level in classrooms has risen on account of such activities, and challenges associated with classroom management have increased. Turkish teachers demonstrated great enthusiasm for the benefits yielded by the use of ICT. The ICT tools concerned were used to screen documentaries, to practice using educational programmes for teaching language skills or mathematics, and for teacher and student presentations. Moreover, project and performance assignments were expected to stimulate learning through discovery and hands-on learning. Although some teachers appreciated their value in terms of stimulating creativity and learning, several

others complained that students delegated such assignments to their parents so the objectives of the assignments were not achieved in practice. Parents' excessive involvement in project/performance assignments has become such a phenomenon that many referred to the new curriculum as 'parent-centred education.'

Although student talking time and the use of aids appear to be common implementation practices in both countries, the way they are interpreted and practiced differed significantly. As explained above, in Uganda, student talking time often meant posing questions to students that required one or two-word responses in chorus. In Turkey as well, teacher questions and short student answers were common, yet students were also given more opportunities to tell stories, or to talk about their experiences, such as their background, families, hobbies and so on. Likewise, the use of learning aids conveyed different meanings and practices in Uganda and Turkey. In Uganda, it often meant making use of printed materials (flash cards and wall charts), demonstrating specific objects while teaching words in English or literacy lessons, or counting with natural objects in Mathematics. In Turkey, on the other hand, it often meant the use of stationery for frequent classroom activities involving cutting and pasting, drawing and colouring, and the use of TV, computers or the internet.

Such implementation differences tell us a great deal about context (teachers and structural realities), as they are highly indicative of local circumstances. Indeed, Steiner-Khamsi *et al.* (2000) suggest that understanding how a transferred education model or policy has been re-contextualized and locally adapted conveys much about the local conditions and realities. For instance, resource availability predetermines what kind of learning materials will be used in classrooms, and how. Likewise, culture, student language proficiency and class size exert a considerable influence on the nature, frequency or duration of student talking time and participation. Moreover, teachers' own interpretations and choices lead to differences, as in the case of grouping and group work. For instance, while in Uganda all teachers organized group seating arrangements, only two teachers out of a larger sample in Turkey followed suit. For Ugandan teachers, group seating was a pragmatic way of dividing a large class characterized by significant differences in children's ability levels. In Turkey, even though group seating was not popular, teachers also organized ad hoc groups for specific classroom activities. In addition, group work also involved group activities and cooperation between children outside of lesson hours.

Implementation challenges

Are the new pedagogies feasible?

The classroom realities observed in Uganda and Turkey differed significantly in terms of resource availability and class sizes. For instance, although some classrooms had computers and internet access in Turkey, Uganda showed deficiencies in even the most basic needs, such as adequate chairs for students. Nevertheless, the Ugandan and Turkish teachers appeared almost equally puzzled and overwhelmed by the implementation of CCP. The majority of teachers in both countries considered the new approach complex, and viewed its implementation in their national contexts as highly problematic. They believed that the implementation process was constrained by a multitude of issues and problems, raising critical questions with regard to its feasibility. These included inadequate teacher training, large classes, the shortage of material, the examination system, language proficiency in English (in Uganda), teacher-related factors, and parental opposition. These challenges should be borne in mind since they have shaped the indigenized versions of CCP in Uganda and Turkey. They are briefly outlined below (see Altinyelken 2010, 2011 for a broader discussion on them).

Most Ugandan and Turkish teachers received ten days of training prior to the piloting, which enabled them to be only minimally acquainted with the main features of the new curricula. Teachers in both contexts appeared very critical of teacher training because of its short duration and low quality. The lack of a sound and thorough basis for CCP led to confusion, frustration and wide discrepancies in interpretation and teacher practices. Moreover, class size was mentioned as one of the biggest implementation challenges in both countries. In Uganda, the average class size in visited schools was 70, and some classrooms had up to 108 students. In Turkey, the average class size was 36 in visited schools, and the maximum was

49. Teachers described the difficulties of teaching in such overcrowded classes, and suggested that CCP has intensified those challenges, as the recommended teaching methods, such as student participation, learning by doing, and group work were time-consuming and difficult to organize. The expectations of policymakers regarding the implementation of CCP in large classes were perceived to be simply unrealistic.

Furthermore, CCP appeared to step up the demand for learning aids in both countries. Nevertheless, teachers were frustrated over the lack of adequate materials, even though they were in a more advantageous situation as pilot schools in comparison to other public schools. Material needs were framed differently since Ugandan teachers were more concerned over the lack of textbooks, visual aids and storybooks, while Turkish teachers made frequent references to computers, the internet, TV, digital learning materials and stationery needs. Ugandan teachers complained about the high cost of materials, the limited supply of printed materials, the inadequacy of the school budget allocation for the purchase of learning aids, the inability of students to provide some of the basic materials, and the time and effort expended by teachers on developing learning aids. Teachers in Turkey also commented on insufficient school budgets for providing learning aids and the implications of resorting to parents to provide for material needs. Indeed, despite the rhetoric on free public education at primary level, parents have been increasingly required to provide financial means for a range of items, including desks, seats, curtains, storybooks and ICT hardware. Such practices have not only raised the financial burden of education on family budgets but also created new forms of inequality within the education system. This has led to great discrepancies in school conditions and has led to visible differences and inequalities between schools, or even between classrooms in a single school.

Nationwide entrance exams to post-primary education pose an important challenge to the implementation of CCP in many contexts because of contradictions between the objectives of a constructivist curriculum (e.g. the development of skills and competencies) and what is assessed during exams (knowledge acquisition). Such contradictions and tensions persist in both Uganda and Turkey, pointing to a lack of educational policy alignment. In both countries, success is defined by exam performance. So even if school management, teachers and parents value the development of abilities, skills and competencies, if students cannot make the transition to good-quality post-primary educational institutions, then the intrinsic value of such competencies becomes questionable.

The language of instruction was raised as an important concern among Ugandan teachers. As in several other African countries, Uganda adopted the colonial language, English, as the official language and the language of instruction in schools. The Thematic Curriculum introduced the use of local languages as the language of instruction at lower grades; however, all schools continued to teach in English in Kampala due to the city's ethnic and linguistic diversity. The use of English was perceived as an obstacle to practicing CCP since several children, particularly those who had migrated from rural areas, had a poor level of English. Consequently, their participation and interaction with teachers and other students were limited. In observed classrooms, some students appeared to be fluent in English, while some others had had no prior exposure to English. Children who had been to nursery schools spoke better English, and those who migrated from the North or the East had the most difficulty in comprehending it.

In Uganda, teacher-related issues that hindered the implementation of CCP include low teacher motivation and morale, inadequate salaries, low teacher status and unfavourable living conditions. Ugandan teachers indicated that CCP made further demands on teachers by asking them to engage children in learning to a greater extent, and by being more innovative and creative in their teaching. However, teachers suggested that many of them lacked the motivation and energy to engage fully in educational change processes.

In Turkey, few teachers raised such issues as a challenge to curriculum implementation, yet they alluded to teacher resistance to proposals for change as a critical issue. Resistance to change was typically attributed to teachers who were relatively senior in age and who had many years of experience, i.e. more than 20 years. Some teachers argued that instead of organising classroom activities, senior teachers continued to rely on more traditional methods of direct teaching, because they viewed change as tiring and demanding. These teachers were also seen as problematic during interviews with policymakers, who openly suggested that once senior teachers had left the system, constructivism would be more widely endorsed. However, interview accounts have shown that extensive reliance on classroom activities and over-emphasis on competencies were criticized by teachers of all ages. Indeed, the majority of them did not approve of the substantial reductions in content load and tended to supplement it with direct teaching due to concerns with students' academic success, nationwide examinations, the increasing demand for private tutoring and deepening educational inequalities. These teachers therefore demonstrated *principled resistance* (Achinstein *et al.* 2006), since they perceived curriculum change proposals as detrimental to their students and to society in general.

Furthermore, in both countries, teachers encountered some parental opposition to the revised curriculum and concerns associated with CCP. In Uganda, partly because of inadequate public awareness-raising prior to the implementation, parents were reported to be confused, ambivalent or displeased with the new curriculum. Parental complaints involved a number of issues, such as the replacement of a subject-based system with learning areas, the overlap with early-childhood education, and the assessment system. For these parents, the new curriculum was a simplified version of the previous one; hence, it was viewed as less challenging. In addition, since the new system encouraged active learning, learning by doing, group activities and play, children were less involved with copying things from the blackboard. However, for several parents written exercises were primary indicators of teaching and learning.

In Turkey, teachers also reported some parental dissatisfaction with the new curriculum. Several parents appeared to be concerned with the quality of education: they were critical of the new curriculum for over-emphasising competencies, and paying inadequate attention to knowledge acquisition. Parents believed that children did not learn much in the new system, as an excessive amount of classroom time was spent on classroom activities. Some parents openly challenged the teachers, arguing that 'children are empty, they do not learn', and they endeavoured to exert pressure on teachers to supplement the curriculum with additional information and to spend more time on lecturing. This kind of pressure particularly came from parents who perceived education as an important social mobility mechanism, and who seemed to be concerned over the incongruity between mainstream schooling and secondary school entrance exams.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to provide a critical and empirical analysis of how a global policy (pedagogical approaches based on constructivism) has been adapted locally in two different country contexts, i.e. Uganda and Turkey. The chapter provided an analysis on how context and local actors mediated education policies that are imported from the West.

The educational transfer process appears to entail distinct forces and mechanisms in the case-study countries, involving a combination of the global and the local. In Uganda, the active role of some international donors (USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation) and the dependence on external aid (which is often accompanied by the lending of reform ideas) seem to be critical to the adoption of CCP. The case of Turkey, on the other hand, demonstrates harmonisation as the policy transfer mechanism, because of the role of the EU, the most influential international organisation in Turkey (Dale 1999). Since the EU also provided funding for the curriculum change process, both harmonisation and imposition operated simultaneously. In Turkey, enchantment with the West, three hundred years of the policy-borrowing tradition from Western countries, and the status of EU countries as 'reference societies' (Schriewer *et al.* 2004) have also contributed to educational borrowing. The interplay of different factors in both cases gives credit to diverse theories that explain the relationship between globalization and educational transfer, yet in different degrees.

Educational policies are adapted and re-contextualized through multiple processes (Dale 1999); therefore, at the level of practice, there appears to be some convergence and many divergences in Uganda and Turkey. In both countries, CCP enjoyed a high level of receptiveness among teachers as the modern and progressive pedagogical approach. At the level of practice, implementation profiles reveal palpable differences because CCP is framed differently in curricular documents by accentuating different aspects of the pedagogy (e.g. research and ICT in Turkey and group work in Uganda), and, more importantly, because it is practiced differently by Ugandan and Turkish teachers. Therefore CCP assumed different forms in the case-study countries. This is not surprising, as an implementation process always involves the application and distortion of what is formally proposed by policymakers and curriculum designers (Lopes *et al.* 2009), and leads to discernible differences, even within the same country. Historical and comparative evidence suggests that continuities, especially at the level of pedagogy, prevail through successive education reforms (Schweisfurth 2002): 'Convergence often occurs exclusively at the level of policy talk, in some instances also at the level of policy action, but rarely at the level of implementation' (Steiner-Khamsi *et al.* 2006, p. 9), because global policies are mediated and re-contextualized (sometimes beyond recognition), undermined or openly resisted by local actors.

It is also important to note that a one-size-fits-all approach to pedagogy fails to recognize that pedagogy is 'both the act of teaching and the discourse in which it is embedded' (Alexander 2001, p. 507). Since teaching and learning are contextualized activities, there can indeed be no justification for a universal and homogenising pedagogy (Tabulawa 2003). Furthermore, positioning the notions of teacher-centred and student-centred learning in opposition and making bipolar comparisons between them poses the risk of oversimplification (Edwards *et al.* 2008). As Alexander (2001) suggests, the pedagogical models should be as far removed as possible from the crude and normative polarising of 'teacher-centred' and 'child-centred' teaching and therefore, mainstream comparative research should abandon this dichotomy. According to Alexander (2001, p. 512), 'Perhaps the most damaging residue of this sort of thinking can still be found in the reports of some development education consultants, who happily commend Western 'child-centred' pedagogy to non-Western governments without regard for local cultural and educational circumstances.'

References

- Achinstein, B. and Ogawa, R. T. (2006), "'(In) fidelity: what the resistance of new teachers reveals about professional principles and prescriptive educational policies'", *Harvard Educational Review*, 76, (1), 30–63.
- Akkaymak, G. (2010), 'Neoliberalism and education: Analysis of representation of neoliberal ideology in the primary school Social Studies curriculum in Turkey', MA thesis, Koç University, Istanbul.
- Alexander, R. (2008), *Essays on pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Alexander, R. (2001), "'Border crossing: towards a comparative pedagogy'", *Comparative Education*, 37, (4), 507–23.
- Altinyelken, H. K. (2011), "'Student-centered pedagogy in Turkey: conceptualisations, interpretations and practices'", *Journal of Education Policy*, 26, (2), 137–60.
- Altinyelken, H. K. (2010), "'Pedagogical renewal in sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Uganda'", *Comparative Education*, 46, (2), 151–71.
- Anderson-Levitt, K. (2003), 'A world culture of schooling?', in K. M. Anderson-Levitt ed. *Local meanings, global schooling: anthropology and world culture theory*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1–26.
- Anderson-Levitt, K. (2008), 'Globalization and curriculum', in F. M. Connelly ed., *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction*. London: Sage, pp. 349–68.
- Ball, S. J. (1998), "'Big policies/small world: an introduction to international perspectives in education policy'", *Comparative Education*, 34, (2), 119–30.
- Barrett, A. (2007), "'Beyond the polarization of pedagogy: models of classroom practice in Tanzanian primary schools'", *Comparative Education*, 4, (2), 273–94.
- Bruer, J. T. (1993), *Schools for thought: A science of learning in the classroom*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Carney, S. (2008), "'Learner-centred pedagogy in Tibet: international education reform in a local context'", *Comparative Education*, 44, (1), 39–55.
- Carson, T. R. (2009), "'Internationalizing curriculum: globalization and the worldliness of curriculum studies'", *Curriculum Inquiry*, 39, (1), 145–58.
- Chisholm, L., and Leyendecker, R. (2008), "'Curriculum reform in the post-1990s sub-Saharan Africa'", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28, (2), 195–205.
- Çınar, O., Tefur, E. and Mehmet, E. (2006), "'İlköğretim okulu öğretmen ve yöneticilerinin yapılandırmacı eğitim yaklaşımı ve programı hakkındaki görüşleri'", *Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* 7, (11), 47–64.
- Commission of the European Communities (2002), *2002 Regular report on Turkey's progress towards accession*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.
- Commission of the European Communities (2004), *2004 Regular report on Turkey's progress towards accession*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.
- Croft, A. (2002), "'Singing under a tree: does oral culture help lower primary teachers be learner-centred?'", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 22, (3-4), 321–37.
- Dale, R. (1999), "'Specifying globalization effects on national policy: a focus on the mechanisms'", *Journal of Education Policy*, 14, (1), 1–17.
- De Baessa, Y., Chesterfield, R., and Ramos, T. (2002), "'Active learning and democratic behaviour in Guatemalan rural primary schools'", *Compare*, 32, (2), 205–18.
- Dello-Iacovo, B. (2009), "'Curriculum reform and 'Quality Education' in China: An overview'", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29, (3), 241–9.

DGIS (2003), *Local solutions to global challenges: towards effective partnership in basic education, country study report Uganda*. Joint evaluation of external support to basic education in developing countries. The Hague: DGIS.

Dolowitz, D. P. and Marsh, D. (2000), "Learning from abroad: the role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making". *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 13, (1), 5–24.

Educational Reform Initiative (2005), 'Yeni Öğretim Programlarını İnceleme ve Değerlendirme Raporu'. [Online] Available at www.org.sabanciuniv.edu.tr/ (Accessed: 17 August 2010).

Edwards, R. and Usher, R. (2008), *Globalisation and pedagogy: space, place and identity*, 2nd edn. London and New York: Routledge.

Gauthier, C. and Dembele, M. (2004), 'Quality of teaching and quality of education: A review of research findings', paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005 'The Quality Imperative'. Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001466/146641e.pdf (Accessed: 25 April 2010).

Ginsburg, M. (2009), 'Active-learning pedagogies as a reform initiative: synthesis of case studies' [Online] Available at www.equip123.net/docs/e1-ActiveLearningSynthesis (Accessed: 7 April 2010).

Ginsburg, M. B. and Megahed, N. M. (2008), "Global discourses and educational reform in Egypt: The case of active learning pedagogies". *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, 13, (2), 91–115.

Guthrie, G. (1990), 'To the defence of traditional teaching in lesser-developed countries', in V. D. Rurst and P. Dalin eds., *Teachers and Teaching in the Developing World*. New York & London: Garland, pp. 219–32.

Işık, N. and Bastürk, R. (2007), 'İlköğretim öğretmenlerinin yapılandırmacı yaklaşımla ilgili öğretim stratejileri hakkında görüşleri', paper presented to IV Eğitimde Yeni Yönelimler Sempozyumu IV Eğitimde Yeni Yönelimler Sempozyumu, 17 November.

Leu, E. and Price-Rom, A. (2006), *Quality of education and teacher learning: A review of the literature*. Washington, DC: USAID.

Lopes, A. C. and De Macedo, E. F. (2009), "A critical perspective on managing curriculum", *Curriculum Inquiry*, 39, (1), 57–74.

Luschei, T. F. (2004), 'Timing is everything: the intersection of borrowing and lending in Brazil's adoption of Escuela Nueva', in G. Steiner-Khamsi ed., *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York and London: Teachers College Press, pp. 154–67.

Mayer, R. (2004), "Should there be a three-strikes rule against pure discovery learning? The case for guided methods of instruction". *American Psychologist*, 59, (1), 14–19.

Meyer, J. W. and Ramirez, F. O. (2000), 'The world institutionalization of education', in J. Schriever ed., *Discourse formation in comparative education*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 111–32.

MONE (2008), 'Temel Eğitim Destek Programı' [Online] Available at projeler.meb.gov.tr/pkm1/index.php?view=article&catid=22:yaptik&id=63:temel-eitime-destekprogramtedp&option=com_content&Itemid=64 (Accessed: 20 March 2010).

MONE (2005), *İlköğretim 1-5 sınıf programları tanıtım el kitabı*. Ankara: Ministry of National Education.

NCDC - National Curriculum Development Centre (2006a), *The National Primary School Curriculum for Uganda, Primary 1*. Kampala: NCDC.

NCDC - National Curriculum Development Centre (2006b), *The National Primary School Curriculum for Uganda, Teacher's Guide Primary 1*. Kampala: NCDC.

Nykiel-Herbert, B. (2004), "Mis-constructing knowledge: the case of learner-centred pedagogy in South Africa", *Prospects*, XXXIV, (3), 249–65.

O'Sullivan, M. (2004), "The re-conceptualisation of learner-centred approaches: a Namibian case study", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24, (6), 585–602.

Price-Rom, A. and Sainazarov, K. (2009), *Active-learning pedagogies as a reform initiative: the case of Kyrgyzstan*, Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

Ramirez, F. O. (2003), 'The global model and national legacies', in K. Alexander-Levitt ed., *Local meanings, global schooling: Anthropology and world culture theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 239–54.

Read, T. and Enyutu, S. (2005), *Road map for the implementation of the curriculum reforms recommended by the primary curriculum review report and approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports*. Kampala: Ministry of Education and Sports.

Roggemann, K. and Shukri, M. (2009), *Active-learning pedagogies as a reform initiative: The case of Jordan*, Washington DC: American Institutes for Research.

Schriewer, J. and Martinez, C. (2004), 'Constructions of internationality in education', in G. Steiner-Khamsi ed., *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 29–53.

Schweisfurth, M. (2002), *Teachers, democratisation and educational reform in Russia and South Africa*. Oxford: Symposium Books.

Serbessa, D. D. (2006), "Tension between traditional and modern teaching-learning approaches in Ethiopian primary schools", *Journal of International Co-operation in Education*, 9, (1), 123–40.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2004), 'Conclusion: Blazing a trail for policy theory and practice', in G. Steiner-Khamsi ed., *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York and London: Teachers College Press, pp. 201–20.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2006), "The economics of policy borrowing and lending: a study of late adopters", *Oxford Review of Education*, 32, (5), 665–78.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2010), "The politics and economics of comparison", *Comparative Education Review*, 54, (3), 323–42.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. and Quist, H. O. (2000), "The politics of educational borrowing: reopening the case of Achimota in British Ghana", *Comparative Education Review*, 44, (3), 272–99.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. and Stolpe, I. (2006), *Educational import: local encounters with global forces in Mongolia*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tabulawa, R. (2003), "International aid agencies, learner-centred pedagogy and political democratisation: a critique", *Comparative Education*, 39, (1), 7–26.

TÜSİAD (1990), 'Türkiye'de eğitim: sorunlar ve değişime yapısal uyum önerileri' [Online] Available at www.tusiad.org/FileArchive/turkiyedeegitim.pdf (Accessed: 10 April 2010).

Ulusoy, K. (2009), "The changing challenge of Europeanization to politics and governance in Turkey", *International Political Science Review*, 30, (4), 363–84.

UNEB - Uganda National Examinations Board (2005), *The achievements of primary school pupils in Uganda in English and Numeracy*. Kampala: UNEB.

UNESCO (2005), *Education for all global monitoring report 2005 - the quality imperative*. Paris: UNESCO.

Windschitl, M. (2002), "Framing constructivism in practice as the negotiation of dilemmas: an analysis of the conceptual, pedagogical, cultural, and political challenges facing teachers", *Review of Educational Research*, 72, (2), 131–75.

Notes

[1] The chapter is based on fieldwork in both countries; data collection took place in June–July 2007 in Uganda and February–May 2009 in Turkey. In both countries, public schools that were selected to pilot the new curriculum in the capital cities were chosen as research sites, and eight schools were visited per country, in Kampala and Ankara respectively. Two forms of data collection, interviews and classroom observation were used. At the school site, interviews were conducted with headteachers and deputy headteachers, and classroom teachers from Grades One and Two in Uganda, and One, Two and Five in Turkey. Interviews with school management amounted to a total of 24 (10 in Uganda and 14 in Turkey), and to 103 with teachers (34 in Uganda and 69 in Turkey). Interviews were also conducted with key informants within the field of education, including ministry officials, international organisations, academics, teacher unions and educational institutions. Furthermore, lessons were observed in Primary One and Two in Uganda (in total 28) and Primary One, Two and Five in Turkey (76 in total), by using a checklist which included items on the level of interaction between students and teachers, student talking time, classroom management and atmosphere.



Copyright © 2014

Bloomsbury Publishing

Registered in England No. 01984336