

Policy Processes with Experiential Validity

Cascade policy through partnerships
to ensure quality education for all





BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

We live in an era of unpredictability, continuously faced with economic, sociopolitical, environmental, and technological changes. These changes necessitate transnational organizations, national and regional governments, and school leaders to learn to take immediate but evidence-informed policy actions, from forming change plans to cascading them effectively throughout the system via international and inter-organizational partnerships. In this turbulent time, however, the quality and equity of education should not be compromised.



ABOUT THE STUDY

Our four-nation comparative project is titled *New Education Privatisation [NEP] in English Education for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL]: A Four-nation Comparative Study*. It investigates how a global agenda of public-private partnerships (PPP) has been adopted by individual countries, and its evolution as it travels through the education system. Using English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as a case, we investigated how PPP affects schooling in terms of teacher professionalism and quality and equity of education.

The practice and impact are shaped by interactions with policy actors at multiple levels and fashioned by the limitations and resources of each country.

The study, conducted in Greece, Australia, Japan and Hong Kong, was funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council.

The study involved:

- Interviews with policymakers
- Analysis of policy (transnational, national, regional and school levels)
- Case study
- Survey study

This brief aims to highlight the factors that affect the cascading of the PPP agenda and offer widely applicable insights and lessons in managing educational reforms via inter-organisational partnerships.

KEY FINDINGS

- Intangible discourses (e.g., the public’s sentiment toward the private sector’s presence in the public education system), as well as tangible systems (e.g., the alignment between teacher preparation and the proposed change) affect the reception and translation of the policy.
- The partnership style was subject to i) the usual role of the levels of government concerning educational changes, e.g., central designer and manager of reforms vs. broker of multiple actors and monitor, and ii) the usual role of the private in the public services, iii) schools’ governance style, among others:

In Hong Kong, individual schools decide policy through their school-based management system with a lump sum annual budget. Partnerships likewise were formed at the school level. Monitoring was openly done through existing systems. In Japan, where the national and regional governments make all policy decisions, the partners were identified and contracted by the governments, and schools followed the mandates.

- The function of the partnerships in relation to schooling, as well as the degree to which teachers’ authority and job security are impacted, shape teachers’ perception of their professionalism when engaging in the partnerships.

In Greece, the government conceives the PPPs as only complementary services for supporting teachers and schools, usually out of school hours. Thus, teachers feel it does not threaten their professionalism and overall helps schools and students. In Australia, English as an Additional Language and Dialect teachers, who were previously hired by the state systems, now need to find jobs directly via schools, which creates uncertainty.

- The quality and equity of education via inter-organizational partnerships, may be breached, as the activities incurred by the PPP (e.g., contract writing, provision of schooling in collaboration with third parties) fall outside of the usual schooling activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are relevant to international organizations, national and regional governments, and school leaders:

In relation to change management

- The macro context, as well as the sub-area that the partnership works on, needs to be considered. Otherwise, the initiative is superficially implemented or fails to be sustained.
- The unplanned impact on teacher professionalism (e.g., teacher status) needs to be examined.
- Changes need to be made in consideration of factors affecting policy cascading (see Figure 1)

Figure 1 Policy Shapers

Adapted from Choi, T. H. (2018). Implementation and impact of language-in-education policies: Insights from South Korea and Hong Kong. In *Routledge international handbook of schools and schooling in Asia* (pp. 518-524). Routledge.

	Reform shapers	Examples
 Reform Features	Reform Specific	Relevance, complexity, ambiguity
	Relational	Maturity, alignment with other policies
 Policy Actors	Identification of All Actors	Intra- and inter-organisations (e.g. officers in the educational offices, teacher trainers)
	Individual Readiness	Awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills
	Interpersonal Readiness	System conducive to two-way communication & collaboration
 Contextual Features	Reform-Specific	Resources (e.g., human, financial), legal preparation, history (e.g., public sentiment)
	Systemic	Public trust about reform motivation, reform pace

In relation to partnership management

- The whole cycle of partnership needs to be planned and enacted, to ensure the quality of student learning, i.e., pre-partnership, contract-writing, implementation, evaluation and sustainability (see diagram below)
- Equity implications need to be considered not just in terms of access, but also in relation to engagement and learning outcome. This can be enabled by considering student identity and their voices.

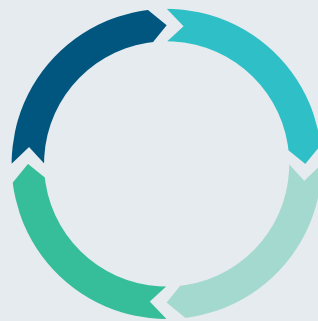
Educational Partnership Management

Identifying the right partners (if possible)

- Consider your system's/school's needs carefully
- Choose a service provider that has a plan for the whole cycle of change (including sustainability)
- Check their credibility and commitment
- Form and work through alliances

Evaluation & Sustainability

- Quantity vs quality
- Share results (emic vs. etic)
- Plan for the next step
- Sustainability planning
- Gradual Transition



Contracting

- Allow for sufficient preparation time
- Planning meetings with all stakeholders
- Agree on learning outcomes with contingencies in mind
- Write a detailed contract

Implementation

- Briefing to stakeholders
- Immediate feedback
- Collaborative system

Choi, T.-H., Walker, A., Tang, S. Y. F., Ko, J., & Chiu, C. S. (2018). Report on outsourcing of education in Hong Kong. The Education University of Hong Kong.

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You can download reports from the project here

<https://edpolicyresearch.wixsite.com/choitaehee>

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