Education Policy and the Politics of Education

TBC (Course Organiser)

Credit Rating 20 credits, SCQF 11

Course Description
This course explores issues in the politics of education and education policy, drawing on concepts from the social sciences such as the state, globalisation, neo-liberalism, discourse, policy cycle, convergence, policy learning and policy borrowing. It will do so by focusing on two areas of policy, the school curriculum and higher education. Education policy is seen as dynamic, changeable and global in its concerns, form and presentation. The course thus starts by studying policy at the national (or sub-national) level – examining recent developments in Scotland – and moves on to embrace UK, European and global levels in turn. At each of these levels it is concerned both with the content of policy and with the way in which policy is made. Finally, it reflects upon the influence on policy-making of different bodies and stakeholders.

The course takes a particular interest in how policies are diffused or transferred between countries and in policy learning from other countries. It examines the effects of globalisation upon the politics of education and education policy making. It locates debates in these areas within Scotland and the UK, Europe, the Arab Gulf States, Asia, and Central America. It provides an analytical framework to examine the influence of global and international organisations.

Through examination of specific policy documentation, and visits to policy making communities, students will be able to comprehend the reality of policy analysis as well as understand the relevance of more theoretical and substantive discourses.
Course Learning Outcomes
On completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- an understanding of the policy literature within the social sciences and its application to education policy
- a knowledge of the major contemporary issues in educational policy, including the effects and impact of globalization, the OECD and EU
- an understanding of how to do policy analysis in education
- a knowledge of contemporary education politics and relevant concepts from political science
- demonstrating an awareness of the theoretical, methodological and ethical issues involved in doing educational policy analysis and analysis of the politics of education

Teaching
10 x 2.5 hour seminars = 25 hours

Each session will involve some formal presentation of the issues in the form of seminar, guided reading or structured questions. This will be followed by seminar discussion.

Each week, students will be expected to read at least one of the suggested reading materials. Seminar discussion will be based on questions emerged from teaching, and essential readings.

Students will also be provided with an opportunity to conduct a policy research in group.

Assessment
One written essay of 4,000 words, which relates to one of the topics discussed during class.
Content

Week  Session Theme or topic
1. Concepts and theories on EPPE
2. Globalisation and Education Policy
3. Curriculum Policy in Scotland and the UK
4. Education Policy – Is there a European perspective on Education Policy
5. Education Policy in Europe
6. Asia and Education Policy
7. Central America and Education Policy
8. Middle East and Education Policies
9. Reading Policy and Policy Research (1)
10. Reading Policy and Policy Research (2)

Week 1
Concepts and theories on EPPE
This seminar will focus on discussing a few fundamental questions embedded in this course: ‘what is policy’, ‘what is education’, and ‘what is education policy’. Education is deeply implicated in the politics of knowledge production. ‘Knowledge’ does not exist in any ‘political vacuum area’, while it is socially constructed in discursive practices, which maintain constant and highly organised power relations (Foucault, 2001). Drawing upon relevant concepts and theories, we will explore the complex relationship between ‘education’, ‘knowledge’ and power’.

We will then explore debates on concepts relating to policy, (such as policy process, stakeholders, policy text and policy discourse). We will discuss the feature of education policy and actors involved in its process.

Essential Readings

http://web.stanford.edu/class/educ232b/Apple.pdf

Additional Readings


**Week 2**

**Globalisation and Education Policy**

Since the mid-1980s there has been an explosion of interest in the idea of globalisation, which has become evident in every aspects of social life, such as the economy, politics, culture and, particularly, education. Through this period there has been an unprecedented rise in prominence and influence of a range of multilateral and supranational organisations, especially those tied into the system of global government. There is now a thickening web of multilateral agreements, global and regional institutions and regimes as well as trans-governmental policy networks and summits that characterize the global economy and polity. A new sense of belonging is created through the establishment of new global orders and rules, with the use of ‘development’ language, rhetoric and discourse.

In this seminar we will focus upon the ways in which education is implicated in these transformations. It will be seen as having an important role to play in socio-political processes, with investment in people, skills and knowledge becoming essential for countries wishing to participate in the global economy. It will also introduce a series of concepts which will be discussed through the following weeks in the course: policy borrowing, lending, learning, buying, senders and receivers.

**Essential Readings**


**Additional Readings**


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**Week 3**

**Curriculum Policy in Scotland and the UK**

Policies and policy-making need to be studied in context. From this week, we will start to bring our discussion of education policy into various contexts. This week, we take start will Scotland and the UK to explore the developments in education policy (you are encouraged to compare this with your own country as another ‘case’).
This seminar will introduce the education system and education policy in Scotland with a focus on primary and secondary education. We will examine the development of policies for the school curriculum, one of the two policy areas examined in more detail in the course.

**Essential Readings**


(Official web site of Curriculum for Excellence. Browse this first if you are not familiar with the reform.)


**Additional Readings**


OECD (2007) *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*, Paris: OECD. A read-only version is available at: http://213.253.134.43/oecd/pdfs/browseit/9107211E.PDF. The Executive Summary can be downloaded from: http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_37455_39744402_1_1_1_37455,00.html#1


**Week 4**

Education Policy – Is there a European perspective on Education Policy?

The seminar will start with defining what Europe is, as this question is important to build up a ground for understanding a European higher education “space”. The most popular perspectives on defining Europe are concentrated around the problem of drawing its borders which are complicated by the clash of geography and politics.

Further, the seminar focuses on the role of education in developing and maintaining ‘the European project’ which has been aimed, primarily, at finding or creating common European standards and identity, often referred to as Europeanization process. The seminar proceeds with elaborating on the European higher education space on the example of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Its goal is to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in its member countries. Lastly, the discussion will focus around the Open Method of Coordination which is based on voluntary participation, and thus, opposed to traditional forms of government by legislature, and which is used to govern higher education reforms in the EHEA.
Week 5

Education Policy in Europe

Drawing upon last week’s discussion on the concept of a ‘European Education Policy Space’, this seminar we will explore education policies in a few countries in Europe.

Essential Readings (Weeks 4/5)


EHEA official website http://www.ehea.info/ (Browse this first if you are not familiar with the issue)

Additional Readings (Weeks 4/5)


Week 6

Asia and Education Policy

In previous weeks, we discussed how globalisation has widely agreed uses for language, rhetoric and discourse, which have affected education and education policy.

This week, we will explore education policies in Asia. Through case studies, in this seminar we are going to explore what challenges these ‘global discourses’ bring to local contexts, and discuss the various ways in which nations have reacted and responded global pressures. We will also discuss the features of these ‘global discourses’ and how they were elaborated through a ‘new global order’.

Essential Readings


Additional Readings


**Week 7**

**Central America and Education Policy**

This week, we will take the discussion on Education Policy into the context of Central America, particularly what policies are being borrow from where in Higher Education. Does the quality of Higher Education benefit from internationalisation?

**Essential Readings**


**Additional Readings**


**Week 8**

**Policy Borrowing in the Broader Middle East: Borrowing a Baroque Arsenal**

Education is increasingly becoming an internationally traded commodity, no longer is it seen primarily as a set of skills, attitudes and values required for citizenship and effective participation in modern society. Rather it is seen (Altbach 2002) as a commodity to be purchased by a consumer in order to build a 'skill set' to be used in the market place or a product to be bought and sold by multinational corporations, academic institutions that have transmogrified themselves into businesses, and other providers.

Of course, there are some countries which, sometimes, do manage to implement education policies to the benefit of their populations. Frequently, these are the countries already in the lead when it comes to global education developments – in ICT, entrepreneurship, skills and training. Indeed, whilst national responses to globalization will need to find their own specific forms, these will inevitably require emphasis on education, training and enterprise. However, even with a focus on education, training and enterprise, there is no guarantee that policies 'borrowed' from elsewhere, from outside a region, will have positive effects. In fact, the opposite may well be the case. This seminar examines debates in the field of policy borrowing in the Middle East.

**Essential Readings**

Donn, G. & Al Manthri, Y. (2013) *Education in the Broader Middle East; Borrowing a baroque arsenal*, Oxford: Symposium Books (especially chapters 4&9, chapter 1 and then chapter 2)


**Additional Readings**

Altbach, P. (1998) *Comparative Higher Education: Knowledge, the University and Development*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press


**Week 9**

**Reading Policy and Policy Research (1)**

This week we examine debates about *language as social practice* and *language as discourse*. We focus on writers who argue that language can be seen as both discursive and structural. In education, for example, we can ‘read’ texts for their ‘textual meanings’. We can relate these to the ‘Production Process’, which occurs under specific ‘Social Conditions’, with these, themselves, being located within ‘Power Structures’.

In analysing education language as discursive and structural, therefore, we examine policy not just in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, but also in terms of key international players – UNESCO, World Bank, OECD and others. Through these key player institutions, there is a focus on Access, Quality, Equity, Relevance, Management and Governance. **At the micro level** we examine how a text is shaped linguistically. We analyse how surrounding texts and actors shape the central text At the **macro level** we focus on the broad structural and ideological issues to see what discourses of power are drawn upon in the text – what discourses dominate and ‘hegemonise’ policy. Our aim is to see how the **Linguistic features of text** frame the field of action, practice and social structures, so that Language is seen as part of society, embedded in social and socially-conditioned processes.

Students will be required to work in groups to design and carry out a policy research.

**Week 10**

**Reading Policy and Policy Research (2)**

This seminar will begin with review the key issues and concepts discussed in past weeks.

To follow the practice last week, this seminar will then give students opportunities to present their policy research.
**Essential Readings (Weeks 9/10)**


Two reviews would also be helpful – these are Coupland, N. in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12/3, 2008: 359-398 and Bachmann I. in *Forum for Qualitative Social Research* 9(1) Art 36, January 2008


UPDATED: 4 August 2015