

Policy Transfer and Educational Change by David Scott, Mayumi Terano, Roger Slee, Chris Husbands and Raphael Wilkins. Pp134 (Pbk). London: Sage (2016). ISBN 978-1-4739-1330-8.

For the last twenty years educational policy transfer and educational borrowing have been high on the agenda of many countries. Comparative international performance data such as PISA have made the prospect of importing policies and pedagogical methods irresistible to governments across the world. The work of David Reynolds (1996) on mathematics teaching in Taiwan was a good example in its influence on the New Labour government's policy on the National Mathematics Strategy in England and Wales. The combination of pedagogical and political issues makes policy transfer an ideal topic for Education Studies.

This book reports on a major policy transfer project in India with the aim of improving the quality of education in India's schools, in particular to make education and schools more inclusive. From the outset it is explained that the project ended largely in failure. A list of bullet points on pp.118-9 list the achievements, they are all along the lines of systems which were set up to gather data and to make improvements, but none actually records improvements in schools.

The authors warn of the danger of attempting to import policy and practice from one culture to another. They explain that the main reasons for the failure of the project were 'the unresponsiveness of the bureaucracy to policy making in different countries' and that 'Indian corporative politics put general loyalty to groups over and above the specific purpose of the organisation in which they operate' (pp.3-4). They list a series of four models for policy reform: the top-down model whereby the government stipulates practices and judgements to be made; the quasi-market model where the government withdraws from policy-making and sets up market systems which hand over power to consumers; the professional model in which power is given to professional experts and the social participation model in which decisions are taken by discussion among different stakeholders. A contrasting model which is recommended in the book is 'policy learning' in which the participants are engaged in a long-term learning process. The findings from the review of the Indian project find that there was insufficient attention given to participants' learning and to learning processes.

The chapters on education policy and transfer are powerfully written and the case for learning policy is well made. There are strong and detailed chapters on the Indian education system and on the principles of inclusive education which are of interest in themselves.

The discussion of education policy is highly theorised and there are few references to examples of actual practice. The book is rightly described on the back cover as 'a useful resource for teachers, policy-makers and postgraduate students. I have never been enthusiastic about distinguishing books for undergraduate or postgraduate use, for each group can often gain from both categories. However, in this case I would not recommend the text for undergraduates, not just because it is a challenging read, but perhaps because it is largely negative in its findings about developing countries and it might deter that inspirational undergraduate enthusiasm for progress and change.

Reference

Reynolds, D. and Farrell, S. (1996) *Worlds apart? A review of international surveys of educational achievement involving England*. London: HMSO.

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