



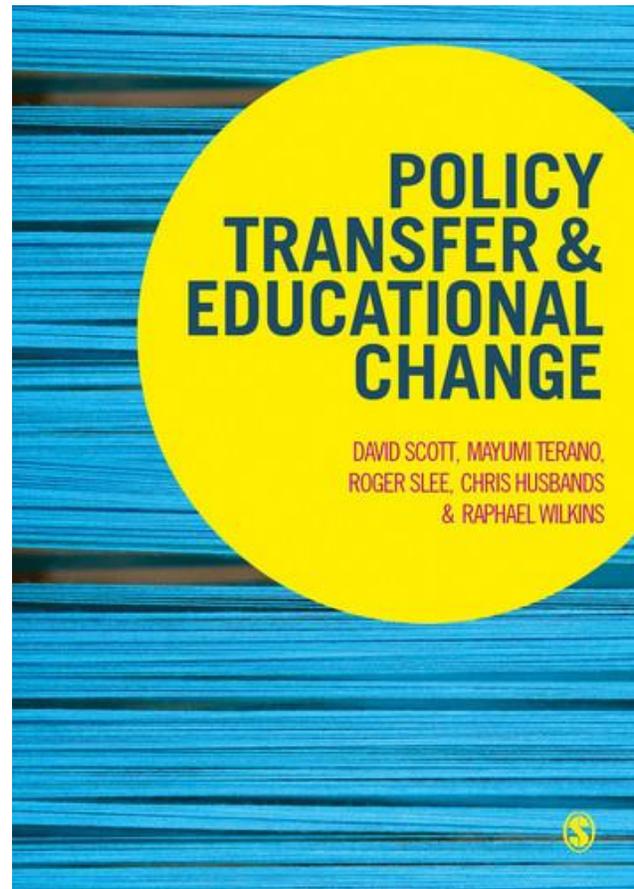
Scott, D., Terano, M., Slee, R., Husbands, C., & Wilkins, R. (2016). *Policy Transfer and Educational Change*. SAGE.

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The authors of *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* promise to demonstrate how to best improve education through their use of a comparative framework that will uncover the flaws in policy transfer as a method of reform. This book successfully challenges the economic, result-driven nature of education reform, and highlights a need for a solution to the ever-present issue of educational reform through policy transfer and adaptation around the world, ultimately working toward the goal of universal education. For readers with limited prior knowledge about global educational change, *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* gives a comprehensive macro understanding of education reform and policy transfer from an international perspective. The authors speak in relatively general terms, working to incorporate both positive and negative examples of countries' education policies around the globe in an effort to provide a more comprehensive analysis of reform.



However, the authors do not accomplish their goal of illustrating successful practice and implementation, and in proposing a general framework for change, further perpetuate the negative impacts of globalization.

Co-written by five scholars, David Scott (University of London), Mayumi Terano (University of London), Roger Slee (Victoria Institute of Education), Chris Husbands (Sheffield Hallam University, England), and Raphael Wilkins (University of London), *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* builds on previous scholarship on education policy and reform. The authors start their discussion with Whitty's definition of education policy as "an object of contest and struggle between competing ideologies, educational visions, personal interests and political organizational positions (p. 5). This definition speaks to the importance of place-specific improvements. It exhibits how policies are directly affected and influenced by the countries in which they are created and the governing bodies that dictate them. The authors then describe John Kotter's eight steps of education reform and explore a variety of models of reform, including the top-down model, the quasi-market model, the professional-development model, and the social-participation model. In the discussion of education reforms, the authors also emphasize the national or regional nature of reform, and that "the same programme of reform in different countries is likely to have different effects on the different elements of the system and will have different histories within the system" (p. 10). Finally, the authors introduce the concept of policy learning as a more successful means of implementing educational change internationally than normative policy borrowing. Scott et al. describe policy learning as the process of "identifying a set of practices which are considered to be successful in one national setting and then transposing them to another national setting, in which a problem or need has been identified" (p. 11). In contrast, policy borrowing transposes a policy from one country to another without any

consideration of cultural differences. The authors advocate for policy learning, which emphasizes the importance of adapting learning practices to fit a given place, taking into account cultural, economic and, structural differences.

According to the authors, policy learning involves adapting pre-existing policies in a way that takes into account cultural values, societal norms, and economic realities within a given region. Throughout the book, the authors use case studies from a range of countries, including India as its main case study, along with England, Australia, New Zealand, and Finland, among others, to illustrate different implementations of educational policies. According to Scott et al., positive educational change is achieved through critical observation of policy management, the development of curriculum, and a concentration on pedagogy. *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* effectively offers an important critique on these issues, exposing the role international institutions have on educational change.

As the authors introduce the different elements of educational reform, one of the most common models discussed is the top-down model. In this model, the government dictates what makes effective policy and how policies can be both implemented and successful. While the authors advocate against the top-down reform model, the structure of the book is its own form of top – down reform. The authors, experts from developed countries, set forth a framework for educational change that benefits the first world countries, leaving out the policy implementing countries in their theorization. In addition, the sophisticated language used in this book limits its accessibility and use, and has the potential to further promote the material realities of top- down reform.

Scott et al.'s globalized framework contradicts their recognition for country-specific reforms. Throughout the book, the

authors emphasize the importance of policy adaptation because “the same programme of reform delivered in different countries is likely to have different effects on the different elements of the system and will have different histories within the system” (p. 17). They use the example of the oil shock in the 1970s and corresponding financial climate around the world shifted the education reform focus on economics (p. 33). Within this time, borrowing a policy from a nation previously thriving economically, and implementing it onto a nation that lacked infrastructure and economic prosperity would prove unsuccessful. Consequently, all of the arguments made in *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* take a globalized perspective, suggesting that reforms for all types of schools worldwide should look the same, disregarding the different cultural, economic, and societal impacts that affect implementation.

In addition to proposing a new method of policy transfer, the authors show the ineffectiveness of existing international education reform organizations, and how they perpetuate the outcome-focused mindset engrained in much of Western educational policy. For example, the authors argue that the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) have been unsuccessful in implementing effective educational change. Generally focused on outcomes, improvement, and the creation of core subjects, these economically driven and corporate-style programs further perpetuating market-focused ideals rather than foster successful building blocks for effectual change, such as effective administrations, teachers, and pedagogies.

One of the most influential bodies of effective educational reform, as outlined in *Policy Transfer and Educational Change*, is the administration. The role of administration in various types of schools, in addition to different countries, differs tremendously. In discussion about the role of administration,

Scott et al. argue that “the primary purpose of the educational administration is not to develop and/ or implement educational policies, but to position leaders and groups using appropriate mechanisms to do so” (p. 4). This statement neglects the governing bodies that centralize or decentralize school accountability. It is important to recognize that the “decentralization of school systems has usually been accompanied by apparently contradictory policies of centralized accountability” (p. 65). The authors use the examples of England and Australia to demonstrate these contradictions. The Australian school system was created in a centralized manner, placing virtually all decision making power in the government run Education Department. In the 1980s, the incoming government worked to decentralize the power, attempting to give the teachers more autonomy and control in the decision making process. The shift in responsibilities made it difficult for the different parties to hold teachers accountable. England, on the other hand, was created in a more devolved manner, separating curricular tasks and infrastructural management, for teachers and government officials respectively, resulting in greater teacher autonomy. The dispersed responsibilities changed under the Local Management of Schools (LMS), which placed a larger emphasis on test scores and universal expectations rather than pedagogy and educational philosophy. Therefore, the school system became more centralized, meaning that it was regulated by government, reducing accountability of curriculum and pedagogy, placing more emphasis on test scores and results.

The process of decentralizing power places the responsibility in the local systems of government or authority as opposed to larger state or national governments. This often benefits a community in terms of financial benefits, sustainable support, and overall societal inclusion (p. 83). The arguments for or against decentralization of educational systems

outlined in *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* ignore the different governing bodies holding schools accountable, and the neo-liberal motivations of many in charge, ultimately failing to show how to effectively implement the decentralization of school systems. The authors recognize the complexities and interconnectedness of schools' autonomy, accountability, and decentralization but do not demonstrate how the three can work simultaneously to produce effective change.

In addition to policy management, Scott et al. identified the development of curriculum and the concentration on pedagogy as important elements to successful educational change. According to the authors, teachers are held responsible for many of the curricular and pedagogical decisions. While both curriculum and pedagogy require constant assessment and revision, the structure laid out by the authors assumes a certain degree of accessibility and resources that generalizes and excludes many developing countries. The authors echo the work of Ben Levin and Michael Fullan, emphasizing the importance of adaptive teaching styles and recognition of learning differences in effecting educational improvements in both the classroom and education systems globally. Adaptive teaching requires looking to the development of intentional pedagogy and viewing teachers as active learners as the stepping stones to successful change. They also emphasize David Kolb's ideas on the importance of learning from "experience, reflection, abstraction, and active testing" (p. 5). In order to effectively illustrate universal application of adaptive teachers, the authors needed to acknowledge the differences for developing countries, and create a framework for places lacking the assumed resources and accessibility.

While there are many ways to view teachers as learners, this book emphasizes the teacher training model of professional learning as opposed to teaching rooted in practices or rule-based teaching. These models differ in

both the content they teach and the manner of presentation. The training method demonstrates to teachers the importance of taking into account the school and its objectives, the students and the different learning styles amongst them, in addition to their own values and approaches to teaching. Training teachers as professional learners has many positive characteristics and is an interesting framework for educational change. This model also supposes a certain level of agency and power in teachers. In placing the responsibility primarily on teachers, the teacher training method disregards the financial and resource limitations that can inhibit many teachers from achieving successful educational change.

*Policy Transfer and Educational Change* presents a case study of India to illustrate how to implement effective policy learning. However, this reviewer found that because of the overuse of multiple countries as case studies to illustrate success or failure in education reform, the authors dilute their exploration of India. The authors talk at great length about the history of the Indian education system, and about recent initiatives such as the Education Movement for All and the Right to Education Act. They do not show concrete examples of how their theory of policy learning applies to the context. Consequently, their use of India as a case study is ineffective. While adhering to Alan Dyson's emphasis on the importance of localizing reform, and

suggest[s] that politicians continue to propose 'solutions' under the assumption that the problem of inequality can be solved when they find a right combination of interventions and structural arrangements (p. 92)

Scott et al. presented no examples from the Indian case study that exemplified successful policy learning. The authors lay out many possible solutions such as the teacher training

model, the concentration on pedagogy and curriculum, and rethinking the role of administration as building blocks for effective change, but the authors do not provide clear examples of policy learning implementation within their case study of India.

As a study of education, the book *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* provides a theoretical framework for effective education reform through its concept of policy learning. Yet, the authors fail to present policy learning as more than a theoretical concept. More research on the implementation of policy learning needs to be done to prove this theory successful. This book is a valuable introductory piece into conversations around education reform, and acts as a great building

block. Policy writers, teachers and administrators should read this as part of the foundation of creating effective educational change. This volume explains the importance of place-specific reform, emphasizing the priority of curriculum development, pedagogy, and teaching training in successful reform. As a reader, the most important takeaway is that while it is important to create a universal framework for education reform, the implementation needs to be place specific, taking into account variables that change the effectiveness in a given location. *Policy Transfer and Educational Change* introduces solutions to issues within educational change worldwide, and a sequel is needed in regards to the implementation of these policies.

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### About the Reviewer

**Laurel Sullivan** is a first year at Colorado College. She is an intended education major interested in studying educational policy and reform at an international level.



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