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### Changing pedagogy: A comparative analysis of reform efforts in Uganda and Turkey

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## CHAPTER: 1

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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This book is the result of a PhD study that offers a critical and empirical analysis of how a ‘global’ policy (pedagogical approaches based on constructivism) is adapted locally in two different country contexts – Uganda and Turkey. The study deals with policy transfer in comparative education, focusing on the implementation phase (see Phillips, 2004). The purpose of the study is to analyse how context and local actors mediate education policies that are imported from the West. The study particularly examines the agency of local actors, by focusing on teachers’ views and experiences with the borrowed policy. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the discussion on globalisation and education, and to respond to a current topic of major academic concern, ‘Are national educational systems increasingly becoming similar as a result of borrowing?’ (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p.201).

#### 1. Educational change in the contemporary world

Since the 1980s, we have witnessed a speeding up and an increased complexity of change processes in the world. The intensification of change has been nowhere more true than in education systems. In several countries, we have observed ‘innovation’, ‘reform’, ‘development’ and ‘improvement’ with respect to various aspects of education, including school governance, teacher education, teaching and learning methods, inspection, school financing, evaluation, and community participation. Consequently, change has become central to educational discourse both in the Western world and in low-income countries in the 1980s and beyond (Altrichter, 2000). Educational change is indeed ubiquitous and it has always been with us in some sense or other. However, many of the changes we have been witnessing now are very different in terms of their substance and form (Hargreaves et al., 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> The theoretical section is partly based on:

Altinyelken, H.K. (2010). Teachers as curriculum mediators: A study on the implementation of Social Studies curriculum in Turkey. In R.V. Nata (Ed.), *Progress in education* (Vol. 22). New York: Nova publishers.

Globalisation and marketisation around the world have resulted in structural and qualitative changes in education and policy, including a focus on the ‘lifelong learning’, or a ‘cradle-to-grave’ vision of learning and the increasing prominence of the discourses of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ in global culture (Zajda, 2010; Dale, 2005; Robertson et al., 2007). Neoliberalism has become the dominant ideology which perceives education as a producer of goods and services that foster economic development. Although UNESCO’s humanistic, social justice and human rights traditions were very influential in the 1960s, this has gradually weakened since the 1980s, and the economic and more instrumental paradigm of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has gained in prominence. Hence, the ideals of human rights, social justice and collectivism have increasingly been exchanged for key concepts of the global economy discourse, including productivity, competitiveness, efficiency and profit maximisation. In other words, neoliberal ideology, which defined education as an investment in ‘human capital’ and ‘human resource development’, has considerably influenced policymakers in many countries (Zajda, 2010; Karsten, 1999). In recent years, however, this ‘narrow economic approach of the major international donors and multilaterals on education appears to have been superseded by a much broader recognition of the role of education which emphasizes its central importance in the socialisation, citizenship and nation-building process – both at home and abroad’ (Novelli, 2010, p. 453).

According to Levin (1998) an overview of education policies and reforms in the past 30 years across national and sub-national contexts, reveals six commonalities of themes. The first three of these are related to the framework for policy in education, while the other three concern the substantive policy changes. These are described by Levin as follows:

1. The need for change is largely cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of a workforce and competition with other countries.
2. There are increasing criticisms of schools and their failure to deliver what is required, yet the criticism seems to be particularly limited to certain groups or sectors and is not widely shared by parents.
3. Large-scale change is not accompanied by substantially increased financial commitments to schools by governments.

4. Educational reform is promoted through changes in forms of governance, assuming that changes in governance are the key to improved performance of schools.
5. Schooling is made more like a commercial activity or market commodity by policies such as requiring parental choice of schools, tying school funding to enrolments, voucher plans of various kinds and charter schools.
6. There is an emphasis on standards, accountability and testing as in many countries large-scale testing of students and more reporting of the results of these tests are observed (Levin, 1998, pp. 131-133).

Depending on their objective financial situation, their interpretation of that situation, and their ideological position with regard to the role of the public sector in education, countries have embarked on a number of reforms that can be classified into three types: competitiveness-driven reforms (e.g. decentralisation, standardisation, improved management of educational resources, and improved teacher recruitment and training), finance-driven reforms (including the shift of public funding for education from higher to lower levels of education, the privatisation of secondary and higher levels of education in order to expand access at those levels, and increasing class sizes in primary and secondary education), and equity-driven reforms (such as reform efforts focused on reaching the lowest income groups with high-quality basic education – youth and adults with no access to basic skills) (Carnoy, 1999). The neoliberal reform movements of recent decades, the globalisation of educational policy, and increasing practice of ‘borrowing’ and ‘lending’ school reforms have led many observers to conclude that educational systems around the world are converging towards one international (neoliberal) model (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

## **2. Renewed interest in pedagogical reform**

In the past two decades, there has been a renewed interest in school pedagogy, and it has assumed a central importance in education reforms that are designed to improve education quality. Pedagogy has been increasingly linked with economic growth, international competitiveness (Alexander, 2008), and political democratisation (Tabulawa, 2003). Reforms aimed at modifying teaching and learning practices in schooling contexts can be viewed as competitiveness-driven reforms as they primarily appear to respond

to shifting demands for skill (both in the domestic and international labour markets) and new ideas about organising the production of educational achievement and work skills (Carnoy, 1999). Indeed, these reforms have often been initiated on the rationale that education systems need to prepare citizens for the knowledge society, which is characterised by increasing globalisation, progressively shorter half-lives of knowledge, and the increasing importance of knowledge creation in order to sustain development and economic competitiveness (Riel, 1998). Robertson also suggests that the interest in reconstructing school pedagogy closely relates to ‘knowledge-based economy’ discourse which she defines as ‘a new, very powerful, discursive imaginary’ (Robertson, 2007, p. 2). She argues that:

Education systems are important (though not exclusive) sites for the production of knowledgeable subjects. It would be important, therefore, to realise a knowledge-based economy for education be renovated in ways that would enable this new kind of self/worker/citizen to be constituted. An economy driven by constant innovation would require a rather different kind of self – one that actively produced new knowledge (and potential products and markets) through processes of assembling and reassembling knowledges (Robertson, 2007, p.7).

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 & Leyendecker, 2008, p. 4). The international donor agencies have played a central role in placing the notions of constructivism on the international reform agenda (Tabulawa, 2003; Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008). Indeed, an overview of policy documents by influential international organisations reveals that learner-centred and skills-based curricula are increasingly the default position internationally. This trend is particularly supported by organisations or development agencies with strong ‘free market’ interests, such as the OECD and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Allais, 2010).

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 characterised 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 SCP, student participation, democracy in the classroom, hands-on learning, cooperative learning groups, projects, and focus on child interests have become globally ubiquitous (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Constructivism has

been ‘increasingly taken for granted as part of notions of educational quality’ (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008, 106).

There are several examples of countries endorsing such pedagogical reforms in the past two decades. In Asia, examples include Tibet (Carney, 2008a), China (Carney, 2008b; Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Huang, 2004), Russia (Schweisfurth, 2002), Kyrgyzstan (Price-Rom & Sainazarov, 2009), Taiwan (Yang et al., 2008) and Cambodia (Bunlay, et al., 2009); in sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa (Nykiel-Herbert, 2004), Botswana (Tabulawa, 2003), Namibia (O’Sullivan, 2004; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008), Ethiopia (Serbessa, 2006), Guinea (Anderson-Levitt & Diallo, 2003), Malawi (Mizrachi, et al., 2008; Croft, 2002) and Tanzania (Barrett, 2007; Vavrus, 2009); in the Middle East, Egypt (Ginsburg & Megahed, 2008) and Jordan (Roggemann & Shukri, 2009); and in Latin America, Brazil (Luschei, 2004), Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador (de Baessa, 2002). Reform initiatives aimed at introducing the reformed pedagogies have often been accompanied by a shift towards competency-based curricula and emphasis on authentic assessment as opposed to summative examinations (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008).

The ‘epidemic’ (Levin, 1998) of such ‘progressive’ pedagogies is by no means new to the educational landscape. For instance, CCP was at the core of the educational doctrines in the Western world in the first half of the twentieth century (Oelkers, 2001). For decades, its educational philosophy has proved to be seductively attractive; it has captivated the imagination of the enlightened while its critics have been made to look increasingly uncaring. Indeed, this ‘progressive’ theory constituted a broad platform on which a variety of liberal reformers has discussed schools and their role in society in the Western world (Darling, 1986). Accordingly, education should follow the spiritual, physical and mental growth of the child, and the educational institutions must adapt their policies and actions in line with children’s natural development. In the first half of the twentieth century, most reforms in the West subscribed to the picture of the good and independent child that only becomes neurotic and destructive because of pedagogical authorities. This image of the child was, at the same time, gender-neutral, culturally independent, and socially free (Oelkers, 2001).

In later decades, such ‘progressive’ approaches have been subjected to increasing scrutiny and critique (Mayer, 2004), and a wide range of studies have demonstrated their inefficiency in improving students’ affective and academic skills (see Gauthier & Dembele, 2004 for an overview). Hence, CCP has been in retreat in parts of North America and Europe (Norquay

1999, Hartley, 2009), as demonstrated by a widespread back-to-basics movement in American education in the 1970s (Smith, 1978) and the UK's disenchantment with CCP and shift to 'interactive whole class teaching' starting from the 1990s (Alexander, 2008).

Such a brief historical consideration reveals three features: first, the more recent global diffusion of pedagogical approaches based on constructivism appear to signal a new diffusion pattern of the 'progressive pedagogies' that curiously coincide with the ascendancy of neoliberalism and particularly with the emergence of 'the knowledge-based economy master narrative' (Robertson, 2007); second, although the 'progressive' pedagogies spread hastily in different parts of the globe, particularly in developing countries, they are at the same time contested in some of the countries where these pedagogies have originated in the West; third, there are also counter-currents towards convergence tendency in the global talk and reform about 'progressive' pedagogy as in the case of the UK or the 'back to basics' reform movements in different parts of the world (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

The recent diffusion of 'progressive' pedagogies raises a number of interesting questions: Although the constructivism and learner-centred curricula are historically associated with social justice and left wing politics (Allais, 2010), how could they gain such a momentum internationally at a time during which right-wing political and economic ideas prevail? How can this seemingly 'paradoxical' development be explained? The diffusion of 'progressive' pedagogies has also revived the debate on globalisation 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 resulted in convergence at the classroom level? And, to what extent has the global and the official national discourse on pedagogy reshaped teaching and learning practices in classrooms? This study 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 – Uganda and Turkey.

Both countries have in recent years initiated a comprehensive review of their curricula for primary schools, proposed changes in the content and organisation of the curricula (adopting a thematic approach and emphasising the development of competencies and skills), introduced alternative assessment methods (continuous assessment in Uganda and authentic assessment in Turkey), and embraced new pedagogical approaches based on

the principles of constructivism (defined as CCP in Uganda and SCP in Turkey). In Uganda, after a one-year pilot phase, the Thematic Curriculum for primary schools was implemented nationwide in February 2007 (NCDC, 2006). Likewise, in Turkey, the 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). By analysing the reform implementation process, this study seeks to examine how the new pedagogies are conditioned by the particularities of Uganda and Turkey, and how these approaches are interpreted and re-contextualised by local actors, mainly by classroom teachers. In doing so, the study seeks to investigate how a 'global' policy is implemented locally in two very dissimilar contexts. In addition, the study will explore possible explanations accounting for the recent popularity of constructivism.

### **3. Conceptual and theoretical foundations**

#### *3.1. Pedagogy*

Pedagogy is a rather complex concept and a variety of definitions is offered as the study on the subject is fragmented. The basic definition of pedagogy refers to the knowledge of teaching. The concept is often used as a synonym for teaching. However, as Alexander (2001) suggests, pedagogy and teaching are not the same, even though they are used interchangeably. 'Teaching is an *act* while pedagogy is both *act* and *discourse*. Pedagogy encompasses the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape it' (Alexander, 2001a, p.540). Brock (2009, p. 68) also defines pedagogy as encompassing 'practice and the principles, theories, perceptions, and challenges that inform and shape teaching and learning'. According to Bernstein (1971), pedagogy refers to the way knowledge is transmitted, and belongs with 'curriculum' as the way knowledge is organised, and 'evaluation' as the way knowledge is realised. This conceptualisation of pedagogy focuses on pedagogic relationship and the social conditions that regulate the transmission of knowledge.

In line with Alexander's definition, in this study teaching will be understood as a practical and observable act, whereas pedagogy will refer to that act as well as the purposes, values, ideas, assumptions and beliefs that inform and seek to justify it (Alexander, 2008). Throughout the book, reference will be made to basic characteristics of classroom practice such as the use of textbooks and workbooks, classroom activities, teacher and student talk, and individual or group learning schemes. Broader curriculum issues,



such as content organisation and student evaluation are also considered as they closely relate to and interact with pedagogy.

### *3.2. Constructivism*

Constructivism is not a pedagogical approach but a theory about how people learn. It perceives learning as an active construction of knowledge (Reusser, 2001). Constructivism is difficult to characterise, as there are many different versions of it, including radical constructivism, information processing, socio-cultural theory and symbolic interactionism (see Prawat, 1996 for a discussion of the alternative perspectives). Constructivism associates knowledge directly with individual learners and considers it to be the product of students' activities. Through processes of accommodation and assimilation, 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, providing pupils with ample opportunities for discovery and interpretation of events is emphasized. Learning to learn is viewed as important as mastering content. The role of teachers in this context is mainly geared to stimulating and coaching students in their learning activities.

A number of scholars have contributed to the development of constructivism. However, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky and the philosopher John Dewey have become the icons of the 'progressive pedagogy'. In many countries, their names appeared as signs of educational progress and several pedagogical reform initiatives evoked their ideas, such as in South Africa, Spain, the Scandinavian countries and the US (Popkewitz, 2000). The Piagetian perspective emphasises individual cognitive processes, and argues that individuals construct a personal reality based on their previous knowledge and new experiences. In this view, knowledge is viewed as an interaction between the environment and the individual. Vygotsky, on the other hand, claimed that learners 'construct their knowledge, not only from direct personal experience but also from being told by others and by being shaped through social experience and interaction' (Reusser, 2001, p. 2058). Therefore, his perspective emphasizes social processes and views learning as

an interactive and co-constructive activity in which both society and individuals play essential roles (Windschitl, 2002).

Finally, Dewey emphasized the behavioural dimension of constructivism, and advocated learning by experimentation and practice, engagement, discovery, inquiry, and empirical problem solving. He viewed learning as experiencing, arguing that all genuine education comes about through experience (Dewey, 1998). These theories on learning have often been supported with theories on child psychology, such as the physiological evidence of the independent development of the senses and feelings, the description of the development of the child according to natural 'phases' or 'stages', and the recording of the environment and behaviour of children in research facilities (Oelkers, 2001).

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

Constructivism is associated with pedagogical approaches that promote active learning, learning by doing and collaborative work, such as CCP, SCP, learner-centred pedagogy, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, discovery learning, problem-based learning or inquiry learning. These pedagogical approaches differ among themselves in terms of emphasizing distinct aspects that are considered to promote learning (e.g. activity, cooperation, hands-on learning) or in terms of actual amount of structure and scaffolding included. However, throughout this book, at the expense of overlooking their differences, they will be grouped as 'progressive' pedagogical approaches that are based on the principles of constructivism. The main reference will be, however, to CCP in Uganda and SCP in Turkey.

### *3.3. Educational policy transfer*

Within the field of comparative education, scholars have studied 'foreign influences' through the notion of 'educational transfer', which is often defined as the movement of educational ideas, practices or institutions across

international borders (Beech, 2006). Studies on the process of educational transfer can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. Until the 1960s, the discussions within the field revolved around two main positions: one position suggested that educational transfer was possible and desirable, while the second position argued that it was neither desirable nor possible. In the 1960s, the debate increasingly focused on the scientific methods that would guarantee the success of educational transfer, and later how the processes of educational transfer could be interpreted as colonialist or neo-colonialist imposition (Beech, 2006), and could be regarded as a form of cultural imperialism (Carnoy, 1974).

Recent studies on the topic attempted to build theory on educational transfer and develop frameworks for analysis (see Dale, 1999; Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2000; 2004). These studies have also identified a number of political actors that have proliferated as a result of globalisation, including elected officials, political parties, civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs, transnational corporations, think-tanks, supranational governmental and non-governmental institutions and consultants (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000). For instance, studies have identified 'policy entrepreneurs', that is, groups and individuals who 'sell' their solutions to education problems in the academic and political marketplace (e.g. 'school effectiveness', 'choice' and 'self-managing school') (Ball, 1998).

An important research area in this field is concerned with explaining why countries borrow or lend educational policies across international borders. In other words, why does educational transfer takes place? When we rephrase this question within the framework of this study, we would then ask 'If the countries around the world seem to be engaging in a similar dialogue on how the pedagogy should be reformed, and if the official discourses seem to be converging around the same model, why is this so?' Different and often competing answers have been provided to this question. According to modernisation theorists, countries borrow educational reforms elsewhere because they are better. The emerging global curriculum (and the pedagogical approach as an integral part of curriculum) is a response to the demands of globalised 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. From this perspective, possible tendencies towards convergence represent progress.

A second view is proposed by world-culture theorists. According to this perspective, 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 & Ramirez, 2000). For instance, constructivism is *perceived* as effective in improving learning achievements and preparing children and youth for the labour market. In the current globalised, increasingly competitive knowledge economy, the business community demands employees who think in creative ways, adapt flexibly to new work demands, identify and solve problems, and cooperate with colleagues in effective ways to create complex products (Windschitl, 2002). Therefore, the assumption that constructivist learning environments are superior in developing and reinforcing such skills and competencies appears to have contributed to its increased 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.

These two theories assume that countries import education policies more or less voluntarily, and they downplay the power asymmetries among them. 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 (Gutherie, 1990; Tabulawa, 2003; Carney, 2008a). 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 diffusion 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.

From this perspective, constructivism is seen as part of an international agenda which aims to improve educational systems in ways that might support the spread of advanced capitalism and global democracy (Carney, 2008a). In this respect, CCP can be considered to be part of the US foreign policy of ‘democracy promotion’ which was initiated in the early 1980s to promote a weak and elitist form of democracy in developing countries. Elite democracy refers to a type of democracy that had been made safe for capitalism by shifting the majority of real decision-making power outside the democratic domain (to autonomous central banks, financial institutions and so on) and by making the democratically elected state responsible for law and order, and managing the needs of capital (Robinson, 1996).

Ginsburg & Megahed (2008) also caution that what is spreading around the world is not real democracy but a peculiar ideology of democracy. They argue that bilateral and multilateral donors have helped to place the notions of CCP on the international reform agenda, particularly since the 1990s, which coincides with the radical political transformation in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. They suggest that such a political environment has enabled the rise of ideologies of ‘democracy’ and the ascendance of multinational corporatist capitalism. The discourse favouring CCP reached a crescendo around the same time because of its assumed link to supporting political democratisation and advancement of capitalist markets.

Postcolonial theorists, on the other hand, argue that subordinate countries sometimes consider a global culture of schooling genuinely attractive since it is associated with and promoted by powerful countries (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). Indeed, in many developing countries, constructivism is viewed as a Western ‘best practice’ and a very well-established educational approach. Therefore, it enjoys an almost hegemonic position with its ‘justified’, ‘admirable’, and ‘inspiring’ educational ideas (Carney, 2008a). Walker and Dimmock (2000) also refer to a dependent and subservient preoccupation with the developments in the West, and describe how policymakers and educationalists in some Asian countries believe that adopting ‘modern’ Western philosophies, teaching, and learning practices would lead to taking advantage of the forerunners. Ball (1998), on the other hand, points to education of Southern experts in Northern countries as a phenomenon that contributes to the perpetuation of cultural and political dependency. He suggests that their return to home countries ‘carries’ ideas, and creates dependency, resulting in devaluation or denial of ‘local’ solutions to educational problems.

Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi emphasizes 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, consultants), as well as political motives at the local level for importing a set of education reforms. By using the ‘externalisation’ concept of Schriewer (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004) as an interpretive framework for analysing the politics of borrowing, Steiner-Khamsi argues that borrowing can function as a means to de-contextualise and de-territorialize educational reforms that are contested in a given country. For instance, when policymakers lack political support for initiating a contested education reform, or if they believe that the reform will encounter significant resistance from various stakeholders, they borrow from abroad to gain legitimacy at home. In this sense, borrowing reflects issues of political legitimacy (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000), and ‘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. By analysing the adoption of outcomes-based education in Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic, Steiner-Khamsi demonstrates that these two countries have adopted the specific policy at a time when loans by development banks were made available for implementing them. In other words, in several low-income countries, 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 look increasingly similar to those in developed countries. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2010) this is mainly because international donors (such as development banks and international organisations) provide funding to low-income countries under the condition that they adopt a specific reform package, which is often presented as ‘best practices’. However, she also adds that the governments of aid-recipient countries are not passive victims as they creatively deal with their economic dependence by redirecting international funds to locally developed ‘national’

programs, and often adopting only the language (not the content) of the imposed reforms.

Finally, Dale's *Globally Structured Agenda for Education* approach also considers the relation between globalisation and education, and argues that the world capitalist economy is the driving force of globalisation and that it directly or indirectly influences the content and form of education policymaking procedures around the world (Dale, 2000). According to Dale, the globally structured agenda for education cannot be reduced to the interests and intentions of any individual nation state because it is 'created by them collectively, in the common interest of those transnational forces currently controlling the global economic system, and constructed as external influences on national systems' (Dale, 2005, p. 120).

Dale (1999) further suggests that in addition to the traditional mechanisms of external influence such as 'policy borrowing' and 'policy learning', a series of other voluntary and non-voluntary mechanisms have gained importance in recent decades. These policy transfer mechanisms are themselves diverse rather than homogenous. They are defined as imposition, harmonisation, dissemination, standardisation, and installing interdependence. While developing his typology, Dale identifies five key dimensions on which the 'new' mechanisms that are associated with globalisation differ substantially from the traditional mechanisms of educational policy transfer. These dimensions encompass the scope of the mechanisms, the locus of viability, the initiating source of the policy change, the nature of the parties to the exchange, and the mode of power employed through the mechanisms.

The 'dimension of power' is particularly interesting to consider for this study. It is based on Steven Lukes' three-dimensional theory of power. According to Lukes, power may be exercised in three different ways, with varying degrees of explicitness and visibility. The first form of power refers to relatively 'naked' use of superior power (power to prevail in decision-making), while the second dimension focuses on the politics of non-decision-making and points to the importance of the ability to exercise power through such means as agenda setting (the power to define the agenda around which decisions are to be made, e.g. OECD and the EU). The third dimension involves the ability to set and control the rules of the game (e.g. setting the rules of 'what education is about') (Lukes, 1974, in Dale, 1999; Dale, 2005). As Dale suggests:

These forms of power are successively less overt and correspondingly more difficult to counter [...] Power over third world states is now much less likely to be bilaterally applied and much more likely to be achieved through a supranationally organized rearrangement of the rules of the game (Dale, 1999, p. 8).

This does not imply that educational policymaking has moved from the national to the supranational level. Dale argues that this is not a zero-sum game, either a national/or supranational game. Rather, he points to the *pluri-scalar* nature of educational governance, and proposes that ‘what we are witnessing is a developing functional, scalar and sectoral division of the labour of educational governance’ (Dale, 2005, p. 132).

### *3.4. Re-contextualisation of educational reforms at the local level*

The term ‘educational reform’ tends to be used interchangeably with ‘educational change’ and ‘educational innovation’ (O’ Sullivan, 1999). In this study, educational reform is understood as change aimed at addressing systemic, deep and large-scale improvement. After reviewing the different phases of educational change, this part will focus on the factors that operate in implementation phase and will sketch three different approaches to curriculum implementation.

#### *3.4.1. Phases of educational change*

Education change moves through distinctive stages of *initiation*, *implementation* and *institutionalisation*. The first phase is defined as *initiation* (also mobilisation or adoption), and refers to a process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. Change can be initiated from a variety of sources, such as central education authorities, districts, teachers or communities. As such, it can be top down or bottom up. A wide range of factors influence the initiation phase, including the existence and quality of innovations, access to information, advocacy from central and school administrators, teacher advocacy, external change agents, community pressure, support, opposition or apathy, new policy and funds, and problem solving and bureaucratic orientations (see Fullan, 2007). The second phase, *implementation*, involves the first experiences of attempting to put an educational reform into practice. The final phase is called *institutionalisation* (also continuation, incorporation or routinisation), and can be viewed as a continuation of implementation phase. It refers to whether the change gets



built in as an ongoing part of the education system or disappears through attrition or as a result of decisions to discard the change (Fullan, 2007; 1993)

There are numerous factors operating at each phase, and influencing the initiation, implementation or institutionalisation phases in multiple ways. Additionally, the phases are not structured in a linear way since events at one phase can consequently alter decisions made in a previous phase. In other words, what happens at one stage of the change process may strongly influence subsequent stages. Furthermore, there are often no precisely demarcated boundaries between the phases, particularly between the implementation and institutionalisation (Fullan, 2007).

#### *3.4.2. Implementation*

The literature on educational reforms illustrates how various reform initiatives have failed to achieve their objectives, and how even the most zealously supported and sweeping reforms can be short-lived and vulnerable from a historical perspective (Ravitch, 1983). For instance, in the USA, a series of large-scale curriculum reforms were initiated in the late 1950s and 1960s. The implicit thinking behind these reforms was that desired improvements at school level could be achieved by flooding the system with external ideas. However, research in the 1970s demonstrated the absence of change at the classroom level and documented massive reform failure because schools often adopted reforms on the surface, altering some of the language and structures but not teaching practices. Experiences with large-scale reforms and outcomes of studies on them have not changed significantly in the following decades either (Fullan, 2007). Likewise, research in developing countries has also demonstrated that implementation of several reforms have encountered serious implementation challenges (Havelock & Huberman, 1970), and often resulted in failure to achieve reform objectives, leading to poor outcomes and waste of considerable time, effort and resources (Rogan & Grayson, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2002; Ward et al., 2003).

These experiences have highlighted that implementing reform policies and putting ideas into practice is far more complex and difficult than foreseen by policymakers and curriculum designers (Fullan, 2007), as 'the lived experience of legislated changes by those forced to implement them often bears little resemblance to the outcomes anticipated by policymakers (Schweisfurth, 2002, p. 14). Change is dynamic, non-linear, unpredictable and challenging (Fullan, 2007), and the impact of national reform is often unpredictable and uneven. The intricacies of a change process and the

multiple problems associated with it appear to be universally acknowledged except for those in a position to dictate change. Education reforms are often developed, prescribed and enforced by groups who are superficially familiar with the realities of classroom life and teachers' work. Besides, political agendas play influential roles in formulating reforms as much as empirical evidence and academic debate (Schweisfurth, 2002).

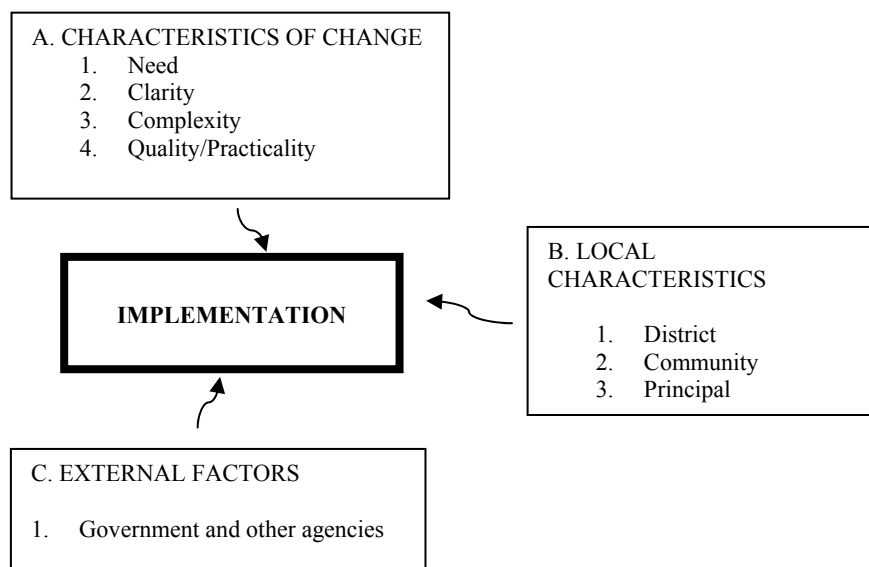
According to House (2000), national leaders formulate their educational policies primarily in response to national economic concerns and they often fail to sufficiently understand or appreciate the educational institutions in their countries. Such focus on economic concerns creates mismatches between educational policies and practices. Policymakers are also often mistaken about their initiatives because:

[...] they are too far removed from educational work, too wedded to powerful interests, too imbued with misleading ideologies and simply misinformed. Thus, educational policies dissolve into ineffectiveness, to be replaced by other mistaken and ineffective policies' (House, 2000, p. 14).

A range of theories, models and approaches have been developed to identify the factors that affect an implementation process and to analyse the complex relations between these factors. Three of these theories will be outlined here. According to Fullan (2007), there are three groups of interactive factors affecting implementation: characteristics of change, local characteristics and external factors (see figure 1).

The *characteristics of reforms* themselves include need, clarity, complexity and quality, while the *local characteristics* refer to the actors involved in implementation, social conditions of change, the organisation or setting in which people work, and the planned and unplanned events and activities undertaken during implementation. These local factors are identified as school district, school board and community characteristics, the principal, and teachers. Finally, government and other agencies are defined as *external factors* that directly influence the implementation process through monitoring, supporting professional development, or clarifying standards of practice. These factors of implementation reinforce or undercut each other as a complex and interrelated system. Therefore, effective implementation depends on the combination of all the factors rather than on single factors (Fullan, 2007).

Figure 1. Interactive factors affecting implementation (Fullan, 2007).

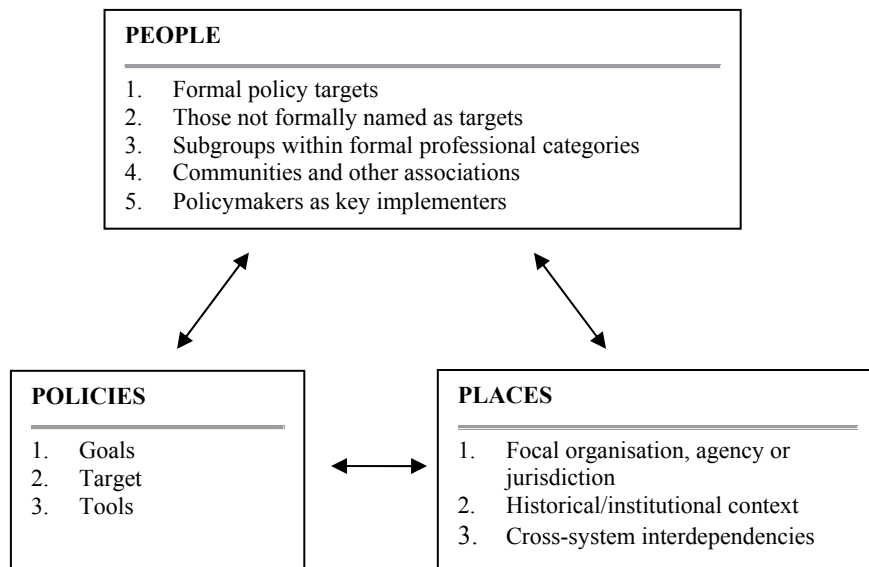


Honig (2006) groups the factors that affect implementation into three: *policy*, *people* and *places* (see figure 2). These three dimensions point to a highly contingent and situated implementation process. It is not possible to understand the benefits and limitations of one dimension separate from the other as different dimensions of policy, people and places combine to shape implementation processes and outcomes. *Policy* designs generally have three key dimensions – goals, targets and tools, all influencing implementation in distinct ways. For instance, the nature and scope of goals pose fundamentally different implementation challenges.

*People* who ultimately implement the policy mediate and transform the policy at implementation level. Hence, variation in implementation outcomes is not the exception, but the rule. In contemporary implementation studies, people have begun to take centre stage as researchers examine how they respond to policy demands. People include actors both inside and outside of formal education system, including parents, youth workers, administrators and health service providers. Furthermore, people do not only include those targets formally named in policy designs but also those who nonetheless participate in and influence implementation (e.g. business leaders and city mayors), subgroups within formal professional categories (e.g. teachers with different roles, such as stimulator, storyteller or networker), communities and associations (e.g. teachers' social interactions and trust relationships within

communities), and policymakers as key implementers. The *places* are also fundamental to implementation outcomes, such as educational agencies or school district central offices. Places also include an analysis of deep-seated historical institutional patterns that shape an implementation process. The linkages between schools and other places also matter as educational policies influence other sectors such as health care, social services and community development (Honig, 2006).

Figure 2: Dimensions of contemporary education policy implementation in practice and research (Honig, 2006).



Finally, Rogan and Grayson (2003) developed an analytical framework based on three major constructs: support from outside agencies, capacity to support innovation and profile of implementation. *The support from outside agencies* refers to the kinds of actions undertaken by outside organisations, such as departments of education, aid agencies or teacher unions, to influence (either by support or sanction) implementation practices. The second construct, *capacity to support innovation* is concerned with school factors that are likely to support or obstruct the implementation of innovative curricular proposals, including physical resources, school ethos and management, teacher factors, and student factors. The third construct, *profile of implementation* is developed in order to assist in understanding, analysing and expressing the

extent to which the objectives of the reform programme are put into practice. Since the profile provides a 'map' of the learning area, it is intended to enable curriculum planners to conceptualise levels of curriculum implementation, and to identify strengths and weaknesses in an implementation process (Rogan & Aldous, 2005).

The details of this framework are described in further detail in Chapter 3 and 6 as it is used in this study for analysing the implementation of the revised curricula in Uganda and Turkey. This tool was chosen for analysis as it has been developed specifically for studying curricular reforms. In addition, the framework enables the examination of the profile of implementation, allowing the researcher to observe how 'global' education policies are practiced in diverse contexts.

### 3.5. *Types of curriculum*

Three types of curriculum can be broadly differentiated: content, which is expected to be learned, the curriculum that is taught by teachers, and the curriculum that students actually learn. The *intended curriculum* (also defined as 'recommended', 'adopted', 'official', 'formal', 'planned' or 'explicit' curriculum) is the body of content contained in official curriculum documents, list of courses, syllabuses and prospectuses. The intended curriculum incorporates core knowledge and values students are expected to learn. It provides a map of theories, beliefs and intentions about schooling, teaching, learning and knowledge. The *taught curriculum* refers to formal and informal lessons taught in classrooms, it is what teachers do to convey content, ideas, skills and attitudes. It is also called an 'implicit', 'delivered' or 'operational' curriculum. Since teacher beliefs and classroom realities alter an intended curriculum, there can be significant differences between the intended and taught curriculum. Finally, *learned curriculum* (also 'the actual' or 'received' curriculum) refers to the reality of students' experiences, and defines what students have actually learned. There can also be large gaps between what is taught and what is learned (Cuban, 1992; Kelly, 2009). These differences between intended, taught and learned curriculum may be conscious or unconscious. For instance, teachers may deliberately implement the curriculum in ways different from the manner suggested by policymakers or classroom realities may not match up to the intentions and expectations of curriculum designers (Kelly, 2009).

### 3.6. Approaches to curriculum implementation

Three different approaches to curriculum implementation have evolved while the researchers have studied the gap between intention and reality, between the theory and the practice of curriculum. The initial and most widely applied perspective in such studies has been the *fidelity* perspective. This approach perceives a curriculum as a course of study, a textbook series or a guide for teacher plans. Curriculum content is defined by external experts and it determines what teachers should teach in classrooms. The fidelity approach has been concerned with determining the extent to which an innovation or reform has been adapted and practiced in schools in line with the intended curriculum and seeks to identify factors that aid or obstruct implementation as planned. Curriculum change is perceived as a linear activity starting from the centre (central educational institutions) to the periphery (schools), involving some systematic changes that leave no role for teachers apart from delivery (Snyder et al., 1992).

In recent decades, ‘mutual adaptation’ and ‘curriculum enactment’ have also been increasingly considered. *Mutual adaptation* is primarily concerned with how the reform proposal is adapted during the implementation stage rather than measuring the degree to which the reform is implemented according to the expectations of policymakers. This perspective focuses on what actually happens in classroom contexts when a curriculum is implemented and seeks explanations from the contexts and the curriculum implementers (e.g. teachers and head teachers) (Fullan & Pomfret, 1977). The approach foresees inevitable modifications in the course of implementation by both curriculum developers and those who use the curriculum in classroom contexts, and considers such adaptations to be an essential characteristic of implementation. This requires increased communication between teachers and curriculum designers so that necessary changes may be made in a curriculum to adapt it to local contexts. Hence, curriculum change becomes more flexible through mutual adaptations. The teachers assume a more active role in this approach since they adjust and reshape curriculum to match their classroom contexts (Shawer, 2010).

Researchers who apply the third perspective, *curriculum enactment*, are interested in studying how curriculum is mediated by teachers as well as by students. This approach views a curriculum as a process jointly created and jointly and individually experienced by students and teachers. Hence, curriculum knowledge is not a product but an ongoing construction evolved out of the enacted experiences of teachers and students (Snyder et al., 1992).

All three approaches recognise the role of teachers, though to different degrees, as a crucial factor in the implementation process. Since this study focuses on teachers as local actors who are involved in implementation of education reforms, the next part will highlight the centrality of their role in the implementation process.

### *3.7. The role of teachers*

The role of implementers at the ‘bottom’ of the education system is critical, since change is ultimately a problem concerning the smallest unit. In this respect, the teacher’s role as interpreter of and responder to policy is as crucial as that of policymakers at the ‘top’ who develop and formulate policy decisions (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Indeed, ‘hundreds of implementation studies testify to the fact that any given policy varies across and within implementing systems and sites and that the “policy” that matters ultimately is the one enacted within the system, not the one originated outside of it’ (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 212). Research has shown that teachers mediate the external demands placed on them in order to produce interpretations of their priorities and desirable classroom practices, which often tend to be very different from those intended by policy directives (Osborn, 2001). In keeping with their knowledge, beliefs, and pre-existing teaching practices (Fullan, 2007), as well as contextual factors, teachers adopt, mediate, resist, or reject reforms. While doing so, they influence the degree of penetration of education reforms at the school level (Napier, 2003). Therefore, the image of the teacher as a neutral conduit between policy and the child is naive and distorted. Such an image ignores teachers’ active and creative selves, and the fact that they have an agenda (Schweisfurth, 2002).

A number of factors influence teachers’ capacity and motivation to internalise change and implement curriculum reforms, including education level, knowledge, skills, identity and beliefs (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Van Veen et al., 2005; Vulliamy et al., 1997). Teachers also respond to reform initiatives depending on what point they have reached in their own personal lives and careers (Fullan, 2007). Teachers’ beliefs about teaching and reform initiatives are particularly influential in their classroom practices (Lumpe et al., 2000; Van Driel et al., 2001). Beliefs function as information filters and they influence how knowledge is used, organised and retrieved. In addition, beliefs are powerful predictors of behaviour as they can reinforce actions that are consistent with beliefs (Gess-Newsome, 1999). Beliefs also aid formation of attitudes concerning particular situations, and such attitudes

might develop into action agendas that guide decisions and behaviours (Pajares, 1992).

In relation to teachers' beliefs, three factors have been identified in the literature as critical for bringing about sustained change. First, teachers' professional and personal motivation is important for complying with and carrying out policy directives (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). For instance, in order to embrace an innovation and initiate change in their practices, they need to believe that change is necessary and the proposed change would address the needs adequately. They need to be confident that the change proposals would benefit their students, education and society in general. Second, teachers need to have the capacity, knowledge and skills to undertake the new tasks and responsibilities required by curriculum reform, and they should have confidence in themselves (competency beliefs). Third, there should not be some contextual factors (such as physical resources, institutions or organisations), and people (parents or other teachers) that interfere with teachers' willingness and decision to change (contextual beliefs). In other words, teachers need to perceive the context or the environmental factors as favourable for carrying out a curriculum initiative (Bandura, 1997; Ford, 1992).

The following typology of teacher responses to education reform is generated by some studies: compliance, incorporation, mediation, retreatism, and resistance. Incorporation has been the most common response as teachers most often consolidate innovations selectively into their own practices (Pollard et al., 1994). This selectivity protects teachers from radical change and allows them to preserve those beliefs and practices that they consider important (Schweisfurth, 2002). Reform initiatives are ultimately translated and modified by teachers, and in some cases, they are openly resisted. Teacher resistance has often been viewed as a 'problem' and reduced to some sort of conservative attempt to frustrate reform initiatives. Hence, the good sense embedded in teachers' resistant actions is overlooked and their understanding of what is good for students is discounted (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995).

#### **4. Research questions**

This study considers pedagogical approaches based on the principles of constructivism as the 'global' policy that has been subject to significant educational transfer in developing countries in recent decades, and seeks to analyse 'How was the transfer implemented?' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, p.164),



in a select number of schools in Uganda and Turkey. The study aims to respond to Steiner-Khamsi's suggestion that we 'must direct our attention to agencies resisting, inverting, or indigenizing educational imports' (2000, p. 158). She argues that research on educational transfer has often tended to neglect agency (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). The current study strives to analyse teachers' views and interpretations of the new pedagogical approaches as well as their classroom practices. While doing so, the study aims to identify to what extent teachers welcome or resist 'global' policies, and how they mediate the imported policies in their daily practices. Because of the focus on teacher mediation, rather than a 'fidelity' approach, the study adopts a 'mutual adaptation' perspective in analysing curriculum implementation (Snyder et al., 1992). Since the research focuses on the implementation process, it does not study the policy development phase. However, based on literature review and some interviews with policymakers, it also briefly describes the mechanisms of educational transfer and the patterns of external influence in the case-study countries.

The main research question that framed this study was 'How is the "global" policy on pedagogy mediated locally in Uganda and Turkey?' In order to provide a comprehensive answer to this question, the following sub-questions are formulated:

1. Why and how are the new pedagogies borrowed by the case-study countries?
2. How are the new pedagogies defined in curriculum documents?
3. What are the teachers' views on the new pedagogical approaches?
4. How do teachers implement the new pedagogical approaches?
5. What are the perceived implementation challenges from the perspectives of teachers?
6. What kinds of outcomes of the new pedagogical approaches are observed by teachers?

## **5. Research methodology**

### *5.1. Comparative education*

Within comparative education, considerable attention has been given to why and how countries borrow education policies elsewhere (see case studies in

Steiner-Khamsi, 2004); however, the re-contextualisation of these policies is considered less often, particularly in relation to reforms aimed at pedagogical renewal. According to Alexander (1999a), comparativists have, in general, tended to focus on national education systems and policies rather than on school and classroom processes. Pedagogy is neglected because: it is not the intellectual field from which comparativists have traditionally emerged; it encapsulates all that is difficult and problematic about cross-cultural and cross-national investigation; it is time-consuming, labour intensive, methodologically fraught and acutely vulnerable to charges of cultural naïveté and ethnocentrism. Yet, pedagogy requires particular prominence in comparative studies to rectify this imbalance of attention.

From a pragmatic perspective, comparativists can no longer ignore pedagogy due to some recent developments in the field, such as the growing prominence of ‘process’ variables in OECD type of studies which have been traditionally based on input-output variables, the rise of school effectiveness research and the extension of its focus to classroom level processes, and the attempts of educational statisticians to encompass the totality of the educational enterprise, including teaching, in multi-level modelling. Besides, policymakers who have been caught up in the international league table game have increasingly acknowledged that what happens in classroom is indeed critical (Alexander, 1999a). Furthermore, Alexander (1999b, p. 149) argues that:

[...] comparative perspective is an important and necessary part of the quest to understand and improve the science, art or craft of teaching, and to enable us to distinguish those aspects of teaching which are generic and cross international boundaries from those which are culture-specific.

He suggests that more attention needs to be paid to teaching, learning and the classroom transactions as they are at the heart of education. Furthermore, a comparative perspective is critical for developing a better understanding of how local agents and stakeholders encounter and respond to global forces of education reform (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000).

### *5.2. Case study approach*

As explained by Yin (2009, p.18): ‘A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. In other words, studying a real-life phenomenon in depth requires understanding important contextual conditions that are highly

pertinent to the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2009). Attention to the subtleties and complexities of the case, providing rich detail and being embedded in reality offers advantages to the case study approach. Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not possible in numerical analysis (Cohen et al., 2007) and they opt for analytical rather than statistical generalisations (Robson, 2002). Besides, case studies help to establish cause and effect as they observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects (Cohen et al., 2007). Case studies also focus on individual actors or groups, and seek to understand the events from their perspectives (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). In this study, the processes of interpretation and sense-making as well as the context particularities were central as they focus on teachers' experiences and perspectives in relation to large-scale reforms. Therefore, case study was a natural choice.

### *5.3. Sampling*

#### *5.3.1. Country cases*

Uganda and Turkey have been chosen as country cases for this study. Originally, the research project only involved a case study of Uganda. However, as the project evolved, Turkey was also added as an additional country case with the desire to examine the re-contextualisation process in a comparative perspective, to generate more compelling and robust findings, and to strengthen analytical conclusions. Therefore, the fieldwork conducted in Uganda was replicated in Turkey at a later stage.

The choice of country was based on a number of factors, including the appropriateness of the cases for the objectives of this study, language, research interest, and access to suitable fieldwork sites. As explained earlier, Uganda and Turkey have recently revised their curricula for primary schools and adopted new pedagogical approaches based on constructivism. In that sense, they are considered suitable for the purposes of this research. I chose Uganda out of several other low-income countries that have recently adopted CCP because of my research interest in sub-Saharan Africa, and my knowledge of English and inability to converse in any of the other languages spoken in the region. Proficiency in the medium of instruction was critical since the research not only involved extensive interviews with teachers and school management but also classroom observations and analysis of documentary data. In addition to being a potentially very interesting case, I added Turkey because of my research interest in the country. Besides, selecting Turkey as the second case was convenient due to my earlier

research experience in the country, knowledge of its socio-economic, political and education system, and my language skills in Turkish as a native speaker. Because of these reasons, adding a second country case did not prolong my PhD study, which would have been a deterrent if I was required to choose a country that I was not familiar with.

Uganda and Turkey are similar in terms of undergoing major curriculum review processes within similar time-frames and scope, and for being ‘late adopters’ of pedagogical approaches couched in the rhetoric of constructivism. However, they differ significantly in many other ways, including their geographical size, population, history, political economy, donor involvement and education system. The national context chapters (Chapter 2 and 5) consider these issues and present the particularities of the two countries. Choosing cases that are very different from each other may be considered appropriate for this study, since the research is aimed at analysing how context (structural aspects) and agents (teachers) mediate ‘global’ policies, and what kind of indigenised implementation profiles emerge as such policies are enacted at school level. In other words, the nature and type of pedagogical reforms which Uganda and Turkey have recently experienced offered enough similarities to warrant comparison, with large differences to help highlight the influence of contextual factors and teacher agency.

I am fully aware that choosing two different education systems, instead of similar ones, does not enable me to have a strong case for studying divergence, as it would be logical to expect a higher probability of divergence between two distinct countries. However, the opposite would be true for studying convergence, since finding traces of convergence between them would be more unlikely. It is important to note here that although the study seeks to respond to the debate on convergence versus divergence of education systems, making a case for either of the arguments does not constitute the primary objective of the research. Besides, the study does not have a normative concern or interest in the reform implementation process. In other words, it does not seek to establish the features of what a pedagogical reform based on constructivism should involve, and how the classroom practices should be. In this sense, the study does not seek an evaluation of the reform implementation process or aim at a comparison of which of the country cases has better ‘succeeded’ in pedagogical renewal.

### *5.3.2. Sampling schools and grades*

A non-probability sampling approach, which is also known as purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), was used in selecting schools. Among the different variations of purposeful sampling, intensity sampling was chosen in this research, as focusing on information-rich cases was considered important. In both countries, prior to the nationwide implementation, the new curricula were piloted in select public schools. For this study, these schools were selected as research sites since they were considered as information-rich sites due to the following factors:

1. They started implementing the new curriculum a year before the nationwide implementation, so they had longer experience with the new curriculum at the time this research was conducted.
2. Teachers in these schools received more extensive in-service training compared to non-pilot schools, and have often been involved in training other teachers.
3. Pilot schools in both countries (particularly in Turkey) have received teaching and learning materials and some other resources from the authorities to enable more effective implementation, so teachers were better equipped with resources to realise curriculum objectives.
4. Selection of schools by the authorities for the piloting process was done in both countries while considering a number of criteria, which involved perceived and actual quality of schools (in terms of student achievement scores, particularly in national tests), student background (e.g. socio-economic status, linguistic and ethnic diversity) and commitment of head teachers to large-scale reform processes.

In Uganda 90 schools in 11 districts, and in Turkey 120 schools in nine provinces piloted the revised curricula. Among these schools, pilot schools in the capital cities were selected for this study as the above-mentioned factors were even stronger for these schools due to proximity to the central authorities, resource availability, and diversity of their populations. In Kampala, there were eight pilot schools, and all were visited for this study, so no further sampling was necessary. However, in Ankara, eight pilot schools out of 25 were sampled randomly. By choosing schools where teachers had longer experience with the new curricula, and were better trained and better equipped with resources, the research aimed at going beyond stating the obvious, and explore the teacher views and practices in 'best possible circumstances' existed in these two countries.

Once schools had been selected, the next stage involved sampling grades. In Uganda, the new curriculum was introduced into each grade level one year at a time. Grade one teachers piloted the Thematic Curriculum in 2006, and grade two in 2007 (NCDC, 2006). Therefore, at the time of this study, the Thematic Curriculum was implemented only in grade one and two; hence, the natural choice was to select these two grade levels. In Turkey, on the other hand, the Curriculum 2004 was piloted at all grades up to grade five at the same time, and nationwide implementation started in the following year in the first five grades of primary education (MONE, 2005a). To replicate the case study in Turkey, grades one and two were selected. However, grade five was also added since it was expected to offer some new perspectives and generate new insights. The particularities of grade five were related to pupils and teachers: these pupils were the only pupils in Turkey who have been educated according to the new pedagogical approach since the start of their schooling. Besides, grade five classroom teachers were teaching grade one when they were first asked to implement the new curriculum five years earlier. So they had the unique opportunity to observe the development of their pupils, as they were educated according to the new pedagogical understandings.

In Uganda, schools had up to three streams at grades one or two (e.g. grade 1/A, 1/B or 1/C). Since the total number of streams was manageable, no further sampling was needed. However, in Turkey, the number of pupils per school – hence, the number of streams at a grade level – could be up to 12. In such cases, the classrooms at each grade level were randomly selected.

#### *5.4. Access negotiation*

Negotiating access to schools was an important issue, particularly in Turkey. In Uganda, the authorities at the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) provided the list of pilot schools in Kampala, together with the telephone numbers of some of the head teachers. Subsequently, I called the head teachers, introduced myself and explained the nature, scope and purposes of the study, and asked permission to visit their schools. All head teachers responded positively. At school sites, I first visited the head teachers and held an interview with them. In case of their absence, I was welcomed by deputy head teachers. Access to classrooms and classroom teachers was facilitated by deputy head teachers who were responsible for the infant section (for grades up to five), as they introduced me to classroom teachers.

In Turkey, access to schools was first negotiated with the central authorities, since it was virtually impossible to get access to schools otherwise. Teachers are not allowed to participate in any research activity without observing official research permits. I made an application in May 2008 to the Educational Research and Development Department of the Ministry of National Education (MONE) which is in charge of evaluating research applications and granting permits. The evaluation process took a few months during which my research proposal as well as preliminary interview questions were evaluated. Once I was granted the research permit, it was sent to the Provincial National Education Directorate in Ankara. The Directorate sent letters to selected schools informing them that I would be visiting to conduct research. Copies of my research proposal were also sent to each school. I called the head teachers or deputy head teachers who were responsible for coordinating research activities to request their collaboration for this study and made appointments. At each school site, I first visited head teachers and they assigned a deputy head teacher to facilitate my research. I was subsequently introduced to classroom teachers by deputy head teachers.

### *5.5. Research methods*

Three types of research methods have been used for this study: collection of documents, interviews and observation.

#### *5.5.1. Collection of documents*

A range of documents was collected at different sites, including schools, universities, Ministry departments and teacher unions. These documents involved curriculum documents (e.g. educational programmes for Turkish, Mathematics, Life Knowledge and Social Studies in Turkey), teachers' guidebooks, booklets, reports and some published works (e.g. publications of teacher unions or reports prepared by Ministry officials). Some papers and presentations were also provided by teachers and school management.

#### *5.5.2. Interviews*

The interview is a flexible tool for collecting data, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used, such as verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard ones (Cohen et al., 2007). It is a particularly flexible and powerful tool for probing into complex and deep issues, and understanding individual actors'

perspectives, understandings, and interpretations of events and processes. The interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) yields the preferred type of interview for this study. Accordingly, topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in an outline form which allows a certain structure in the data collection without losing flexibility to adjust to the particularities and idiosyncrasies of individual accounts. The interviewer decides sequence and wording of questions during the course of the interview. Having an outline improves the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection more systematic. Interviews remain reasonably conversational and situational. There are also less constraints and limits to the naturalness and relevance of questions and answers in comparison to standardised open-ended interviews and closed interviews (Patton, 1990).

Interviews were conducted with a range of actors within the education sector, including Ministry officials, members of education institutions, academics, teacher union representatives, school counsellors, and of course the head teachers and teachers who are the focus of this study. By talking to different stakeholders within the education system, the research aimed to explore how different actors understood and viewed recent curricular reforms. Their involvement was also critical to understanding broader discussions and contextual issues that have influenced curricular processes. In total, 24 interviews were conducted with individuals other than teachers and members of school management. Interviews were typically conducted in their offices, on one to one basis (with some exceptions), and the duration of the interviews ranged between 40 minutes and two hours. The interviews were open-ended and informal since it was almost impossible to devise an interview guide that would be relevant to actors working in such diverse positions. With the consent of the participants, the majority of the interviews were tape-recorded.

At school sites, interviews were conducted with school management (Uganda 10 and Turkey 14) and teachers (Uganda 34 and Turkey 69). In line with the chosen interview approach, an interview guideline was developed and used in both contexts with necessary adaptations to the particular contexts. The guideline included the following questions: the background of teachers (age, gender, years of experience, training); their experiences of in-service training prior to piloting, and their views on its appropriateness and quality; general views on the revised curriculum; views on curriculum changes introduced in the curriculum content, pedagogical approach and assessment system (and changes in language of instruction policy in Uganda); how they practise the new curriculum in those areas; perceived and



experienced constraints in the implementation process; perceived outcomes of the revised curricula; and responses they have received from pupils and parents. In addition, multiple other subtopics were probed and explored during interviews.

In both countries, the majority of interviews were conducted in classrooms and in some cases in teacher staff rooms or schoolyards during lesson hours. Although conducting interviews within the classroom in the presence of pupils was not ideal, the circumstances did not allow any other option. In Uganda, the classroom teacher system has been recently introduced together with the new curriculum to lower grades, which meant that teachers were expected to teach all learning areas in classrooms they had been assigned to. However, due to high student numbers, a co-classroom teacher system existed in some schools. This allowed me to interview a teacher outside of the classroom while the co-teacher was in charge of the class.

Turkey also has a classroom teacher system up to grade five, but only one teacher is assigned per classroom. While negotiating my access to classrooms with school management, I was clearly told that they would facilitate my research as long as it would not disturb the normal school day. Classroom teachers were teaching consecutive hours non-stop, with only a 20 minute lunch break. They appeared to be reluctant to stay at school at the end of the school day for interviews due to their other commitments. Therefore, the school management suggested that I could conduct teacher interviews in the classrooms during 'reading hours', or when teachers assign some other activities (such as drawing) that would keep the children quiet and occupied. Teachers were advised to stay in the classroom during those hours to manage the classroom. Grade five teachers, however, had more flexibility since some of the subjects were taught by subject specialists. Therefore, I could make appointments with grade five teachers when they were not teaching. No serious limitations were observed during interviews in classrooms, although some interruptions were experienced when teachers were guiding pupils or maintaining classroom order.

The interviews ranged between 30 minutes and an hour, and interviews were recorded in writing, as the majority of teachers have displayed an apparent preference for this type of data recording. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in English in Uganda and in Turkish in Turkey. The Ugandan teachers were fluent in English; therefore, apart from some negligible difficulties arising from differences in pronunciation, no apparent communication problems were experienced. In Turkey, conversing in Turkish greatly aided interviews in terms of establishing a cordial

relationship with teachers, building confidence, and covering several issues in relatively shorter periods of time.

### 5.5.3. Observation

Observation allows the researcher the opportunity to collect 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. Thus, instead of solely relying on second-hand accounts, the researcher can look directly at what is taking place. Such opportunities have the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods (Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, as what people do may differ from what they say they do, observation provides a reality check (Robson, 2002). In this study, unstructured observations were conducted on school premises (such as in a staff room or the corridors) and semi-structured observations were performed in classrooms. Observations focused on *facts* (e.g. infrastructure, resource availability, the number of pupils, seating arrangements), *events* (e.g. student teacher interaction, classroom activities, group work), and on *behaviour* (e.g. teachers' approach to pupils, the degree of friendliness or aggressive behaviour).

In Uganda, lessons were observed in 28 classes in primary one and two, while in Turkey 76 lessons were observed in primary one (31), two (28) and five (17). In both countries, lesson observation was carried out at different times of the day and on all working days. The duration of lesson observation ranged from 30 minutes to two hours in Uganda. Lessons were observed almost in all learning areas, yet the majority were in English, Literacy and Mathematics. Teachers seemed to focus mainly on these areas, and they also appeared to prefer teaching these learning areas in the presence of the researcher, possibly due to the high importance attached to the achievement of literacy and numeracy. These learning areas also appear in the curriculum more often than others.

In Turkey, the duration of lesson observation was 40 minutes. At primary levels one and two, classroom observations were carried out in three lessons, Turkish, Life Knowledge and Mathematics, whereas at primary level five, only Social Studies lessons were observed. In both countries, before lesson observations, I introduced myself to pupils, and answered their questions about my own background and about the research. Afterwards, I maintained a passive presence by sitting in the back, and not interacting with the children. I used a checklist during classroom observations, which included items on classroom organisation, teacher and student activities, student talk,

the level of interaction between students and teachers, teacher feedback, classroom management and atmosphere. The observations were aimed at documenting the presence or absence of learning activities set out in the curriculum and at comparing teacher accounts of what they do in the classroom with their actual practices.

#### *5.6. Reflections on the researcher role*

In both countries, I was considered an ‘outsider’, yet to different degrees. For Ugandan teachers I was someone who lived in a Western country but also someone who originated from another, distant country that many of them knew little about. In that sense, some considered my experience inspiring as I was viewed as a woman ‘who could make it in the Western world’. My researcher position as an ‘outsider’ seemed to aid open discussions with Ugandan teachers as some remarked that ‘I can tell you such things; you are not from here and you will leave soon’. In general, the Ugandan teachers appeared to be used to having researchers from foreign countries studying their education system.

In Turkey, I was also seen as an ‘outsider’ since I no longer lived there. However, I was at the same an ‘insider’ since I was a Turkish citizen and moved abroad at an adult age after completing my university degree in Turkey. My Turkish identity appeared to be critical for the research process as many Turkish teachers considered education and the new curriculum a very sensitive and political issue. There was considerable distrust among some teachers towards Europeans and their historical ‘imperial ambitions’ over the country. Therefore, I was also questioned with regard to my affiliations in the Netherlands and motivation to conduct the study. Some directly asked with much suspicion ‘Why do they want to know about the Turkish education system?’ I needed to highlight that I was the one who had developed an interest in the topic and had added Turkey as a case to my doctoral studies. Indeed, in both countries, it was important to emphasize the independent nature of the study.

I tried to build trust with research participants by explaining the scope of my study, my interest in studying this subject, and my educational and professional background. I also highlighted my interest in education in general, as someone whose father as well as several extended family members had been primary school teachers. Such accounts seemed to help with my rapprochement with teachers. I also underscored the fact that I was not in their school to inspect, control or evaluate their work, or to determine

how well they implemented the reforms. I explained that I wanted to learn from their experiences, interpretations and reflections. I encountered several questions about my life and work, and I tried to be open about these questions. However, I tried to avoid teachers' questions and requests for evaluating their performance. Some approached me directly to ask if they were 'doing it right' and some asked for instructional strategies to improve their teaching and for managing large classrooms.

### *5.7. Data analysis*

Data analysis relied on a systematic organisation of primary data into categories and themes. It involved activities to organise, account for, and explain the data, and to identify patterns, themes, categories and regularities. The data can be organised and presented by people, by issue and by instrument (Cohen et al., 2007). In this study, data is organised by methods and people (groups and individuals). The interview notes, verbatim transcription of the audio tapes as well as classroom observation notes were typed and organised as interviews and observations. Then interviews were further categorised as interviews with key actors, school management and teachers. The texts were read for a general understanding and for delineating emerging themes and codes. Then, the responses were coded with the aid of specialised computer software (ATLAS.ti). The information per code was printed out, read and compared systematically, looking for shared responses, patterns of response and significant differences. While doing so, tentative interpretations and explanations were developed.

### *5.8. Ethical considerations*

The informed consent of those who took part in the study both in and outside school contexts was sought. For this purpose, before interviews and observations, the participants were told about the nature, scope and purpose of the study. The participants had the right to refuse to take part in the research or to withdraw afterwards. Nevertheless, there may have been some issues relating to volunteering, as some teachers in both contexts might have felt 'coerced' to participate due to the fact that I was introduced to them by school management and (kindly) asked to collaborate. Besides, in the case of Turkey, I had research permission from the Ministry and the schools received a letter from the provincial administrative authorities that I would be conducting research in their schools in due time. These might have created

the impression among some teachers that it was their duty to take part in the study. However, I stressed particularly that they had a right not to take part in the study. I also explored the slightest signs of reluctance to make sure that it was the teachers' own free choice to share their opinions and experiences for the purposes of this study. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality, school names are not mentioned in any of the publications. Likewise, identities of the participants are not revealed. However, since the research was conducted in public schools involved in piloting the new curricula in the capital cities, the schools are easy to identify (particularly in Uganda). Then again, the relatively large number of teachers who took part in the study makes anonymisation possible.

### *5.9. Limitations of the study*

A number of limitations were observed in this study. As a Turkish citizen and someone who was born and educated in Turkey, I have a deeper understanding (compared with Uganda) of the political economy of Turkey, its culture and education system. In addition, factors such as my Turkish identity, the opportunity to converse in my native language, the longer stay and more extended fieldwork period in Ankara, and participation of higher numbers of Turkish teachers in the study have contributed towards a richer and more expanded account of Turkish teachers' experiences and practices in comparison to the data on Ugandan teachers.

The second limitation is related to the choice I made at an early stage in my project in favour of doing my PhD in articles. This not too common strategy had certain benefits, as it allowed me the opportunity to receive comments and criticism from journal editors and anonymous peer reviewers while the PhD was still in progress. It generated a sense of accomplishment as the submitted articles were published or accepted for publication, and provided a certain degree of reassurance. However, there were also some inherent disadvantages to it. A thesis in book format allows for more detail than a journal article, and this is also expected. Due to the word limits journals demanded, detailed information on various aspects explored in this study could not be reported in the articles. For instance, providing 'thick descriptions' of teachers' classroom practices or verbatim presentation of their accounts was not possible because of space limitations, although such descriptions are important and common to research based on case studies.

## **6. Outline**

Following this introductory chapter, the book is structured into two parts, each focusing on a single country. The first part starts with a brief chapter introducing the national context of Uganda by providing an overview of its political history, economic and demographic background as well as its education system (Chapter 2). Then, the implementation of the Thematic Curriculum is analysed from the perspectives of teachers by using an analytical framework developed by Rogan and Grayson (2003) (Chapter 3). The final chapter of this part focuses on reforms relating to pedagogy, and examines teachers' views on CCP, their classroom practices and the perceived implementation challenges (Chapter 4).

The second part follows a similar structure, as it first briefly explores the broader contextual issues, political history, economic and demographic background and education system of Turkey (Chapter 5). The following three chapters present the findings of the Turkish case study by first analysing the implementation of Curriculum 2004 (Chapter 6), then examining teachers' opinions on SCP, their classroom practices and perceived challenges in implementation process (Chapter 7), and finally by exploring teachers' views and responses to change proposals regarding curriculum content, emphasizing the 'good sense' embedded in teachers' resistance to education reforms (Chapter 8). The final chapter of the book provides a conclusion by highlighting the key findings of the study, and attempts to respond to the questions raised in this introductory chapter (Chapter 9). It also considers the implications of the major findings for theory and policy on educational reforms, teachers and pedagogy, and offers some directions for further research.