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

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[Link to publication](#)

CHAPTER: 9

Conclusion: A converging pedagogy in the developing world?[7]

In this final chapter, the main findings of the research will be recapitulated and comparative analysis between the two countries will be made by focusing on five aspects: the rationale and mechanisms of educational transfer, teachers' views on the new pedagogical approaches, their classroom practices, perceived outcomes, and implementation challenges. While doing so, this section will attempt to respond to the research questions defined in the introductory chapter. Furthermore, the implications of the major findings will be considered with regard to theory and policy on educational reforms, teachers, and pedagogy, and some directions will be suggested for further research on relevant topics.

1. Major findings

1.1. Educational transfer: Why and how are Western pedagogies imported?

In the past two decades, pedagogical reforms based on the rhetoric of constructivism have featured as a recurrent agenda in the global education reform discourse. A range of countries with diverse educational histories, cultures, and structures have initiated reforms to modify classroom practices according to the principles of constructivism. Uganda and Turkey were no exceptions to this trend, as they also adopted 'progressive pedagogies' in the mid-2000s. In both countries, the new pedagogies were imported within the framework of improving education quality, and the pedagogical renewal constituted an integral part of broader curriculum review and change processes. While adopting the 'progressive pedagogies', both countries have also initiated changes in curriculum content and student assessment. In Uganda, the content has been reorganised according to a number of thematic areas, and in Turkey, the content load has been reduced and a thematic

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approach has been considered in content organisation. Both curricula have adopted a 'competence-based' approach as opposed to the traditional knowledge-based curriculum approach, and have emphasized the development of select competencies and skills. In terms of student assessment, both countries attempted to move beyond testing, and adopted continuous assessment, which is framed as authentic assessment in Turkey.

Before presenting the main findings on how 'global' policies on curriculum are formulated and re-contextualised in Ugandan and Turkish contexts, I would like to point to Ball's assertion that education policies that emanate from the 'new orthodoxy' are rarely translated into policy texts or practice in direct or pristine form (Ball, 1998). He argues that:

> National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice (Ball, 1998, p. 126).

1.1.1. The rationale

The official account (as interpreted from curriculum documents, policy statements and interviews with policymakers) on why the new pedagogies are adopted point to a dissatisfaction with student learning achievements, the inefficiency of the education system, and the urge to re-structure the pedagogical practices in line with the imperatives of the knowledge-based economy in which 'we now live in, or are moving toward' (Robertson, 2007, p. 2). In Uganda, the primary concern is related to the very low achievement levels in literacy and numeracy (UNEB, 2005), and the inefficiencies of the system as indicated by high dropout and repetition rates (Read & Enyutu, 2005). Child-centred pedagogy appears to have been embraced as an antidote to the traditional teaching with the hope that learning achievements and competencies will consequently improve, particularly in literacy and numeracy. A literate and numerate population is viewed as critical to economic growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. In Turkey, on the other hand, globalisation, the knowledge-based economy, the EU membership process and the harmonisation with the EU education system, the changing social and economic needs of Turkish society, concerns with low

student motivation, and disappointments with the results of Turkish pupils in international tests (particularly PISA) are highlighted as important motives. The new pedagogies that are based on constructivist principles are considered to be 'progressive', 'modern', and 'advanced', and viewed as the only alternative to the traditional teaching practices in both countries.

The Ugandan discourse emphasizes the importance of changing pedagogy to improve learning achievements, thereby reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth. Within the context of South Africa and Namibia, Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008, p. 8) suggest that:

> […] learner-centred education is considered the vehicle to drive societies and economies from mainly agricultural bases into modern and knowledge-based societies with the attendant economic benefits. Advised and supported by multilateral organisations advocating the need for different and better learning outcomes, learner-centred education is accepted as the pedagogical ideal to facilitate this change.

The Ugandan case also reflects such rationales, as well as outside influences. The Turkish discourse, on the other hand, more directly stresses the importance of reforming pedagogical practices to better respond to the labour market (both domestic and international) and to produce the type of human capital demanded by the employers. In this respect, frequent references are made to the knowledge-based economy (and knowledge as a factor of production) and the importance of life-long learning. By changing the pedagogy, policymakers believed that the education system would stimulate economic growth, improve the competitiveness of the Turkish economy, and contribute to better integration with global markets. In this respect, the role of TÜSİAD (which consists of the largest holding companies and the most prominent industrial entrepreneurs), or the role of the 'market' in general, in changing the curriculum and the pedagogy has been strong (see also Akkaymak, 2010).

In both countries, the discourses on the rationale for a new pedagogy reflect the primacy of economic considerations. This does not come as a surprise, since such considerations have come to characterise many of the education policies initiated in different parts of the world. Levin explains that in the past three decades:

> The need for change in education is largely cast in economic terms and particularly in relation to the preparation of a workforce and competition with other countries. Education is described as being a key component of countries' ability to improve or often even to maintain their economic welfare [...] Economic rationales are not, to be sure, the only reasons being advanced today

for educational reform. Equity goals are still cited and so is individual social mobility, but the balance has clearly changed in the direction of an economic emphasis (Levin, 1998, p. 131-132).

1.1.2. Mechanisms

The educational transfer process appears to involve distinct forces and mechanisms in the case study countries, involving a combination of the global and the local. The interplay of different factors in both cases gives credit to different theories that attempt to explain the relationship between globalisation and educational transfer, yet to different degrees. I personally do not think that the diffusion of pedagogical approaches associated with constructivism can be explained by their 'superiority' in terms of improving learning achievements or facilitating the development of select competencies. The outcomes of such pedagogies are contested, or the results are viewed as inconclusive in many developed countries where these pedagogies had a better chance of being implemented because of resource availability, smaller class sizes, and improved teacher training (Alexander, 2001; Gauthier & Dembele, 2004; Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004; UNESCO, 2005). However, the perceptions and the assumptions linking 'progressive pedagogies' with improved student learning and better preparation of workers for the contemporary labour markets appear to have strongly influenced education policymakers to import CCP to Uganda and SCP to Turkey.

In this sense, the world culture theory partly helps to explain why the 'progressive pedagogies' have been imported in several developing countries. However, this theory fails to recognise the role of particular international actors who have been involved in diffusing such pedagogies in different parts of the world, such as bilateral organisations (e.g DANIDA and USAID), international organisations (e.g. The World Bank and UNICEF), or other agencies (e.g. the Aga Khan Foundation and some international NGOs) which had different motives and agendas in promoting 'progressive pedagogies'. Therefore, the diffusion cannot only be explained by how policymakers perceived the links to be between pedagogy and a range of outcomes desired by them, or by their voluntary actions to import 'progressive pedagogies'. The phenomenon is much more complicated than that. The world system theory, particularly Tabulawa's ideas (Tabulawa, 2003) capture some of the complexities ignored by the world culture theory, as it points to power issues and to the 'hidden' agenda of those actors involved in diffusing 'progressive pedagogies'. Yet, this theory overemphasizes the role of international actors and discounts the agency of

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the recipient countries, and overstates imposition and coercion as policy transfer mechanisms.

I believe Steiner-Khamsi's notions of 'politics of education transfer' and 'economics of education transfer' better explain the complexity of education policy transfer as they highlight both the role of international and local actors and the interplay between the two, and point to a multiplicity of transfer mechanisms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010; 2006; 2002; Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). If we look at the cases of Uganda and Turkey from these perspectives, we observe that Uganda exemplifies a country where the 'economics of education transfer' has been critical. The Ugandan education system is highly dependent on external assistance, as more than half of the budget is paid for by donors (DGIS, 2003). This in turn creates 'a situation in which "voluntary policy transfer" is enmeshed with "coercive policy transfer"' (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p.6). Donor aid is often accompanied by lending of reform ideas, and even with the wholesale transfer of a comprehensive reform package formulated by the lender (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). In other words:

> Policy borrowing in poor countries is to the education sector what structural adjustment, poverty alleviation, and good governance are to the public sector at large: a condition for receiving aid. As a requirement for receiving grants or loans at the programmatic level, policy borrowing in developing countries is coercive and unidirectional (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, p.324).

In Uganda, USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation have been actively involved in diffusing and institutionalising 'progressive pedagogies' in primary schools. For this purpose, they have developed and implemented projects in primary schools and teacher training institutes in different parts of the country. According to some accounts, they have been very influential during the curriculum change process and in endorsing CCP as the official pedagogical approach in the new curriculum.

The case of Turkey is interesting in terms of understanding both the politics and economics of educational transfer. The restructuring of the Turkish economy in line with neoliberalism was initiated in the 1980s, and the influence of such policies was also felt in the education system. However, the accommodation of the content of primary curriculum to the market was achieved with Curriculum 2004. The curriculum change was initiated in the two years after the AKP came to power, so the adoption of SCP coincides with a significant political change in Turkey. The political change is noteworthy in the sense that the AKP is the only party with Islamist roots that

came to power in the history of the Republic. They had their own distinct vision of Turkish society and the education system. Even before coming to power, they announced that they would initiate wide-ranging structural changes to the education system, including changing the curriculum for primary schools (AKP, 2001). Since they were able to form a single party government, they also had the political power to initiate fundamental changes (Akkaymak, 2010).

In addition, accession to the EU has been another strong political motive in Turkey. In this sense, 'harmonisation' as a mechanism of policy transfer (Dale, 1999) appears to have been influential in the adoption of SCP. Furthermore, the role of TÜSİAD deserves attention. TÜSİAD has published a number of reports on education since the 1990s, urging the governments to initiate major changes in the education system. Their reports have often formulated the role of education in economic terms, and suggested that the education system's primary responsibility is to produce an adequate workforce for the labour market. As early as in their 1990 report, SCP was highlighted as the pedagogical model to be adopted, since it was considered to facilitate learning to learn and to develop important skills such as problem solving, team-work, research, and entrepreneurship (TÜSİAD, 1990).

Kaplan (2006) argues that interest groups in Turkey, including religious nationalists, neoliberal industrialists, and the military, compete with each other in promoting their particular worldviews through school curricula. It appears that the neoliberal industrialists (together with the more religiously oriented groups, such as several members of the ruling party) have succeeded in putting their notions of education in Curriculum 2004, since it heavily emphasizes the neoliberal discourse, and focuses on leading students to adapt and develop new skills that the business world desires (Akkaymak, 2010).

The economics of policy transfer is also highly relevant in the Turkish case as well, since the curriculum review was funded by the EU. The funding raised questions among teachers, as they enquired whether the funding was accompanied by lending of educational ideas. Such a possibility was strongly refuted by policymakers, yet considered seriously by some of the teachers, head teachers and other stakeholders who shared their opinions on this topic. Indeed, in both countries, policymakers appeared rather defensive about any implications of 'outside imposition', as they particularly stressed that they voluntarily imported the new pedagogies from the West. In Turkey, the 'enchantment' with the West, the three-hundred year tradition of policy borrowing from Western countries, and the status of the EU countries

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as 'reference societies' (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004) have also contributed to educational borrowing on pedagogy.

1.1.3. *Main features of the new pedagogies*

In Uganda, the pedagogical approach is labelled CCP in the new curriculum, as it is in several other sub-Saharan African countries. The Turkish curriculum, however, refers to the imported pedagogical approach as SCP. Unlike in Uganda, the Turkish curriculum also makes frequent references to constructivism as a learning theory, and makes bipolar comparisons between constructivism and behaviourism. Despite their different characterisations, Uganda's CCP and Turkey's SCP have several common features. The differences between the two are more pronounced in terms of emphasis given to various aspects of the pedagogical approach.

The Ugandan curriculum interprets CCP as: interaction among children, and between children and their teacher; emphasizing classroom activities that enable children to handle materials and learn by doing; encouraging increased use of learning and teaching materials during lessons; advising organising lessons around the interests, concerns and abilities of children; and giving them the opportunity to influence the direction of the lessons. Students' active participation in lessons, student talk, and group and pair work are emphasized. Learning by way of exploration, observation, experimenting, and practising are highlighted. In the Turkish curriculum, SCP is also defined in very similar lines as student participation, classroom activities, the use of learning aids, hands-on-learning, and cooperative learning. Curriculum documents in both countries clearly suggest that the majority of lesson time should be spent on classroom activities. The four discernable differences with the Turkish case regard the emphasis in Turkey on research activities, project-based learning (project and performance assignments), the use of ICT in classrooms, and integration of learning activities in and outside school, which anticipates and requires parents' increased involvement in education.

In both countries, the curriculum focuses on the development of select competencies, and it is believed that the new pedagogies would significantly help to improve them. The Ugandan curriculum focuses on the development of six life skills, which should occur in every theme and sub-theme. They include effective communication, critical thinking, decision-making, creative thinking, problem solving and self-esteem (NCDC, 2006b). The Turkish curriculum, on the other hand, prioritises the development of

eight competencies: critical thinking, creativity, communication, problem solving, research, using information technologies, entrepreneurship, and language skills in Turkish (MONE, 2005a). The commonalities among the selected competencies are striking, as four (out of six) competencies prioritised in the Ugandan curriculum are also prioritised in the new Turkish curriculum, i.e. critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking and effective communication skills. In addition, decision-making and self-esteem, two other competencies targeted by the Ugandan curriculum are also highlighted throughout revised educational programmes in Turkey. In both countries, the 'progressive pedagogies' also aim at stimulating team work, cooperation and dialogue.

These findings appear to support the convergence theory at the level of policy. The similarities in curriculum content (e.g. thematic organisation and the focus on the development of select competencies), student evaluation (e.g. introduction of alternative assessment methods that evaluate learning processes), and pedagogical approach (e.g. emphasis on classroom activities, student participation, cooperation and hands-on-learning) give credit to the world culture theorists (John Meyer and his colleagues at Stanford University) (Ramirez, 2003). Does this evidence then point to a single global curriculum model or pedagogical approach? Indeed, it indicates the prevalence of pedagogical reforms couched in the rhetoric of constructivism and convergence around how education policies are formulated in this area. However, since official curriculum and mediated curriculum tend to differ substantially, it cannot be taken as an evidence of convergence at the level of practice. Furthermore, it is also important to note that there are some counter-currents to these trends, such as 'back to basics' reform movements that emphasize the transmission of a fixed curriculum rather than student inquiry (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

1.2. Teachers' views: are the new pedagogies desirable?

When asked about the new pedagogical approaches proposed by the new curricula, the Ugandan and the Turkish teachers have expressed opinions that shared a lot of common features. These discussions centred on the redefined roles of teachers and students in learning processes and the main attributes that characterised the proposed pedagogies. In both countries, teachers commented that the new pedagogical approaches are aimed at moving the 'centre' of teaching and learning processes away from teachers and closer to students. The terminology used in curriculum documents or in discourses

have also conveyed this message explicitly: the 'old' was labelled as 'teacher-centred' and the new as 'child-centred' or 'student-centred'.

Teachers, in general, believed that the new pedagogical approaches attempt to re-define their role in education, and have wide-ranging implications for their profession as they are now expected to play 'facilitating' roles within classrooms. Their primary role is no longer conveying knowledge but mediating students' learning processes, and providing adequate guidance and support to these supposedly 'autonomous learners' as they embark on constructing their knowledge. The students' role has become critical to educational processes as they are expected to assume much more responsibility in their learning and to be active in classroom processes. More importantly, it is now students who are required to direct learning (e.g. their interests, needs, learning styles, capacities, motivation and readiness), not teachers. This could be seen as a *quiet revolution* within classrooms, an attempt to change the century-old dynamics between teachers and primary school pupils, and an effort to give the 'seat of power' in classrooms to its 'rightful' owners – the children.

Since the 'old' was critiqued and discredited in an effort to glorify and legitimise the 'new', having teachers at the 'centre' was increasingly communicated as authoritarian, uncaring, inefficient, and morally wrong. Several teachers gave credit to this discourse both in Turkey and Uganda, arguing that education is about children, so they are the legitimate 'centres' of schooling; increased student activism in learning processes would lead to greater learning achievements and better outcomes in competencies and skills; and higher student involvement would improve motivation, concentration and attendance. A pedagogical approach based on the transmission model has been attacked in both countries to the extent that some Turkish teachers appeared uncomfortable during interviews when they disclosed that they occasionally lectured in their classes. It almost sounded as if they were confessing some sort of crime. Yet, as Alexander (2008, p. 79) insists: 'Transmission teaching is ubiquitous [...] because there are undoubtedly circumstances in which the transmission of information and skill is a defensible objective, in any context.'

Nevertheless, some teachers were critical of the dominant discourse. Only one teacher in Uganda expressed resentment with CCP and with the tendency to perceive everything from the perspective of the child. Likewise, some Turkish teachers expressed strong resentment towards the choice of words: by labelling the new approach as student-centred and the previous one as teacher-centred, the policy discourse mistakenly suggests that the previous

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system was not focused on the education of children, as if it were more about teachers rather than students. Indeed, a polarised understanding of pedagogy was prevalent in both countries, not only among teachers but also among other key stakeholders who participated in this study. Such an approach appeared to have forced teachers to align with either the 'old' teacher-centred (or subject-centred) approach, or with the 'new' child-/student-centred approach. Only very few dared to suggest that educationalists could instead move beyond such a dichotomous perspective.

Teachers' definitions of the main attributes of the reformed pedagogies had some commonalities as well as divergences. In Uganda, teachers associated CCP with grouping children, more student talk and activity during lessons, and an increased use of learning aids. The Turkish teachers also made reference to student participation (as more talk and a range of other classroom activities) and increased use of learning and teaching materials, but grouping as a seating arrangement did not feature as an attribute of SCP since it was hardly ever done. The Turkish teachers also emphasized hands-on learning, and project, performance, and research assignments as highlights of SCP.

These differences between Ugandan and Turkish teachers appear to emerge from two factors: the ways in which the reformed pedagogies are defined and the aspects that are accentuated in the official curricular documents, and the differences that emerged in the implementation process. For instance, reference to the importance of research is made in both Ugandan and Turkish curricular documents (NCDC 2006b; MONE, 2005a), but in the Turkish case it is emphasized more, and during the implementation phase it also emerged as one of the highlights of SCP. On the other hand, although grouping is also advised in both sets of curricular documents, the emphasis was stronger in the Ugandan case and the teachers also showed a greater interest in grouping in their implementation practices. The majority of Turkish teachers, however, preferred to ignore and dismiss this strategy, and only selectively used it during some assignments. In other words, teachers' conceptualisations and definitions of the new pedagogical approaches were based not only on how the pedagogies are defined in curricular documents but also on the common features that emerged during implementation.

In both countries, although a number of serious concerns were raised with regard to various components of the revised curricula (such as the increased shift to competencies at the expense of knowledge, or the inadequacy of the assessment system), the proposed pedagogical approaches enjoyed a high level of receptiveness. In Uganda, CCP was viewed as the

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'modern' and 'progressive' pedagogical approach. Except for one, none of the teachers appeared to be critical of the pedagogical approach and they appeared to shy away from questioning its underlying assumptions and main principles. It was simply perceived as a much more 'superior' pedagogical approach to traditional teaching. The only concern for them was adopting CCP in Ugandan classrooms. Apparently, their classrooms were very different from classrooms where CCP was perceived to originate and widely used in Western societies. Since class sizes and resource availability were seen as central to CCP, the feasibility of effectively implementing this pedagogy in Ugandan classrooms appeared questionable, since these classrooms were characterised by high student numbers and resource scarcity. In short, the Ugandan teachers did not question the desirability or the appropriateness of the new pedagogical approach, and appeared to welcome it as example of Western 'best practice', but were overwhelmed by its implementation.

Likewise, SCP was perceived as the more 'advanced' and 'progressive' pedagogical approach by the majority of Turkish teachers. Some even explicitly noted that 'no one could be against it as no one can openly oppose development and improvement'. Furthermore, like Ugandan teachers, SCP was perceived by many as the only alternative to the traditional teaching methods which were attacked by policymakers, teachers, and parents alike for being ineffective and boring. Some earlier studies have also identified overwhelmingly affirmative opinions and attitudes among Turkish teachers towards constructivism (Çınar et al., 2006; Işıkoğlu & Baştürk, 2007). Such a positive attitude was mainly based on the belief that SCP was the dominant pedagogical approach in schools across Western Europe. The West was viewed as advanced, developed, rich, and successful. Implicit assumptions were made about the link between the development level of Europe and school pedagogy. Although research studies have not established a clear link between economic development and teaching and learning approaches (Alexander, 2008), the teachers as well as policymakers believed that SCP could potentially stimulate economic development and raise the competitiveness of the Turkish economy. Adopting a Western 'best practice' was also considered logical and practical. After all, Turkey has often turned to the West in the past three centuries to modernise and reform its military, legal, economic, political, or educational system (Ulusoy, 2009). Therefore, teachers' accounts in both countries suggest that similar to policymakers, the majority of teachers viewed the West as the 'reference society' (Schriewer &

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Martinez, 2004). Hence, the pedagogical approach the Westerners might be using had credibility, legitimacy, and enjoyed a certain reputation.

Nevertheless, Turkish teachers' accounts are not so uniform, as strong criticism was also voiced by them. Indeed, some teachers expressed explicit resentment at and frustration with trying out foreign ideas. These teachers believed that educational ideas might work well in the countries of origin, but might fail when they were transplanted into new contexts. In this respect, teachers also pointed out that Turkish society is very different from Western European societies, with respect to its vast socio-economic differences between the urban and rural citizens, the competitiveness of the education system, the hierarchical nature of relationships that involve an element of authority, the dynamics of parent-child relationships, the status attached to having a university degree, parental involvement in education, and so on.

Some teachers also believed that the new approach was not completely 'voluntarily' embraced by policymakers on the rationale of effective and better learning. They made reference to the EU funding of the project and to the EU harmonisation process which obliges Turkey to adopt some legislation and a number of reforms in various sectors. Hence, these teachers viewed SCP as a soft 'imposition' by the West, and asked:

> I wonder whether they are really using this pedagogical approach in their own schools. I doubt that. The West tends to dump their obsolete systems or technologies on us or whatever they find undesirable in their own countries, such as their cement factories.

A few other teachers even suggested that SCP could be viewed as a powerful tool of imperialism, as it 'effectively' dilutes the education system and undermines the quality of education, creating 'ignorant' masses who are equipped with some competencies in order to work dutifully for manufacturing companies.

Furthermore, some teachers argued that teaching and learning is not significantly different in the new system. They believed that good teachers were already practising elements of SCP, as they were creating opportunities for student participation and were using learning aids. They objected to the efforts to demarcate the 'old' and the 'new' pedagogical approaches and perceive them as complete polar opposites. They asked 'What we did in the past, what we used to do all those years, was it all wrong?' Furthermore, a few teachers argued that a single pedagogical approach should not be imposed on teachers, that they should be free to apply different approaches.
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These teachers argued for a combination of direct teaching and SCP, selectively applied according to student needs and the particularities of subjects. In sum, many Turkish teachers also confirmed the desirability of importing a pedagogy from the West, but some also appeared highly critical, clearly stating that it is not desirable, not only because it is imported from a context that is very different from Turkey, but also because the pedagogy itself had certain shortcomings.

1.3. Classroom practices: a case for convergence or divergence?

No other field in educational research than comparative education is more engaged and predisposed to analyse globalisation processes, and tendencies in global convergence or divergence of education policies and practices (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). Most comparativists are interested in examining the international convergence of educational systems, and for this purpose they use their studies on education transfer to explain why and how educational systems in diverse contexts are becoming increasingly comparable (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000). Other recent research on education policy transfer, however, has stressed that borrowed ideas or practices are modified, indigenised or resisted as they are implemented in the recipient countries (Schriewer, 2000; Philips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). In other words, since imported education policies are locally mediated and re-contextualised through multiple processes (Dale, 1999), the consequences of transfer remains unpredictable (Beech, 2006). Dale (1999) refers to an increasing recognition that national differences in educational practices remain, despite the spread of globalisation, questioning the arguments about greater homogeneity of policy or practice in education, or tendencies towards convergence.

When we look at how the new pedagogical approaches imported from the West are re-contextualised and locally adapted in Uganda and Turkey, we observe convergence at a superficial level around new rituals and practices that have emerged or have been reinforced as a result of the new pedagogies, including increased efforts to use learning aids, or to involve and activate children during lessons. However, the findings point more strongly to the persistence of divergences across nations. Divergence was not only manifest when the implementation profiles of the two countries were compared, but was also persistent when schools within a country or even classrooms within a school were compared. In other words, significant differences across schools and classrooms were observed as reform practices

were embraced unevenly, interpreted differently and adaptations to classroom realities and student background have produced distinct implementation practices.

An overview of implementation profiles in Uganda and Turkey reveals distinct elements as well as some commonalities. In Uganda, the three most common indicators of change in classrooms included student talk, use of learning materials, and seating in groups. However, these changes were often formalistic and interpreted in different ways than intended by policymakers. For instance, student participation was praised frequently by teachers, and has become a buzz-word among them. Although teachers reported increased student talk, during classroom observations, pupils were observed as giving answers in chorus to teachers' questions. The lessons were often dominated by teachers' questions which were limited to basic information recall, which required one or two-word answers. However, some teachers also made efforts to engage children more fully in two learning areas (News and Story time), yet time allocated to these has been gradually eaten away because of pressures to finish the curriculum on time.

Likewise, a formalistic adoption of group work was observed in visited classes in Uganda. Studies in other sub-Saharan African countries have shown that changes in seating arrangements were the first − and in many cases the only − sign that teachers were implementing CCP (Nykiel-Herbert, 2004). In the majority of Ugandan classrooms, children were seated in very large groups (up to 30 pupils in one group) and conducting meaningful learning activities proved difficult in such large groups. Grouping was mainly used to group children according to their ability and to allow them to share limited materials. Furthermore, singing was a very common practice in Ugandan classrooms, as in several other sub-Saharan African countries (Croft, 2002). It was often used as a strategy to separate learning areas, to introduce children to new themes, and to improve their motivation and concentration.

In Turkey, similar to in Uganda, student talk and use of aids were common indicators of change. However, unlike Uganda, there was also much emphasis on classroom activities, use of ICT, and project, performance, and research assignments. During lessons, teachers devoted the majority of lesson time to activities listed in student workbooks. The activities were varied, and needed to be done individually, in pairs, or in groups. Teachers suggested that classrooms have become noisier because of such activities, and challenges associated with managing classroom order have increased. Turkish teachers were very enthusiastic about benefiting from ICT. The ICT tools concerned

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were used to show documentaries, to practise using educational programmes for teaching language skills or Mathematics, and for teacher and student presentations. Moreover, project and performance assignments were expected to stimulate learning by discovery and hands-on learning. Although some teachers appreciated their value in terms of stimulating creativity and learning, several others complained that pupils delegated such assignments to their parents so the objectives of the assignments were not realised in practice. Parents' over-involvement in project/performance assignments has become such a phenomenon that many referred to the new curriculum as 'parent-centred education'.

Another aspect that was emphasized in Turkey was research. Children were frequently given research assignments to inform themselves about a given subject and to enhance their understanding of how research is conducted. The assignments required interviews with elders or officials, visits to organisations, and frequent use of published resources or internet. However, in practice, similar to project/performance assignments, these were also delegated to significant others in the extended family, and even profit-oriented actors got involved, such as stationery shops which searched for the topic on Google and then delivered a few print-outs to pupils.

Although student talk and the use of aids appear to be common implementation practices in both countries, the way they are interpreted and practised differed significantly. As explained above, in Uganda, student talk often meant asking students questions that required one or two-word responses in chorus. Teachers would start with a sentence and pause in the middle, expecting pupils to guess the missing word. Such practices were often interpreted as student talk and participation. In Turkey as well, teacher questions and short student answers were common, yet pupils were also given more opportunities to tell stories, or to talk about their experiences, such as their background, families, hobbies, and so on. Likewise, the use of learning aids conveyed different meanings and practices in Uganda and Turkey. In Uganda, it often meant making use of printed materials (flash cards, wall charts), demonstrating concrete objects while teaching words in English or literacy lessons, or counting with natural objects (e.g. stones or beans) in Mathematics. In Turkey, on the other hand, it often meant use of stationery materials for frequent classroom activities involving cutting and pasting, drawing and colouring, and the use of TV, computers, or internet.

Such implementation differences inform us a lot about the context (teachers and structural realities), as they are very indicative of local circumstances. Indeed, Steiner-Khamsi and Quist (2000) suggest that

understanding how a transferred education model or policy has been re-contextualised and locally adapted conveys much about the local conditions and realities. For instance, resource availability predetermines what kind of learning materials will be used in classrooms and how. Or, put otherwise: culture, pupil's language proficiency, and class size have substantial influence on the nature, frequency, or duration of student talk and participation. Moreover, teachers' own interpretations and choices lead to differences, as in the case of grouping and group work. For instance, while in Uganda, all teachers organised seating in groups, only two teachers out of a larger sample in Turkey did the same. For Ugandan teachers, group seating was a pragmatic way to divide a large class characterised by significant differences in ability levels of children. In Turkey, even though group seating was not popular, teachers also organised ad hoc groups for specific classroom activities. In addition, group work also involved group activities and cooperation between children outside of lesson hours. In such cases, pupils often met at one of the homes. Parents who were informed by classroom teachers about the activities were in charge of guiding and managing the group.

In short, implementation profiles of the reformed pedagogies reveal observable differences because the new pedagogies are framed differently in curricular documents by accentuating distinct aspects of the pedagogy (e.g. research and ICT in Turkey and group work in Uganda), and, more importantly, because they are practised in different ways by Ugandan and Turkish teachers. Therefore, the new pedagogies took different shapes in the case study countries. This is not surprising as an implementation process always involves application and distortion of what is formally proposed by policymakers and curriculum designers (Lopes & DeMacedo, 2009), and leads to discernable differences, even within the same country.

Carney, for instance, portrays how learner-centred pedagogy is 'heard differently and with very different consequences' by Han Chinese and Tibetan minorities in China (Carney, 2008b, p. 79), while Napier (2003, p. 52) demonstrates how education reforms in South Africa are re-creolised at the school level by teachers, administrators, or other local actors who 'sometimes resist, mediate, and transform the substance of reforms into forms shaped by internal realities and contextual factors'. In their study on curriculum reform in sub-Saharan Africa − specifically focusing on learner-centred pedagogy, outcomes, and competency-based education and the national qualifications framework − Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008, p. 8) have also identified a growing homogenisation of educational discourse. However, they also pointed to continued divergence from the discourse at the

level of practice as 'ideas are re-contextualised and displaced, unable in the majority of instances to meet the social and development goals demanded of them'. Indeed, 'convergence often occurs exclusively at the level of policy talk, in some instances also at the level of policy action, but rarely at the level of implementation' (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p.6.), because global policies are mediated, re-contextualised (sometimes beyond recognition), selectively adopted, undermined, or openly resisted by local actors.

1.4. Perceived outcomes: are we better off with the new pedagogies?

Teachers in both contexts reported a number of positive outcomes. The Ugandan teachers highlighted increased student participation, motivation, and improvements in life skills. They believed that pupils were much more involved and assumed more responsibilities in learning processes; hence their motivation and alertness have improved. Lessons have become more enjoyable and interesting for both teachers and children. Teachers also suggested that as pupils had more opportunities to talk, express themselves and interact during the lessons, their life skills have improved − particularly their self-esteem, assertiveness, confidence, and communication skills. Likewise, teachers in Turkey have reported a number of positive outcomes that were similar to the aspects highlighted by Ugandan teachers. They emphasized increased student participation, enjoyable lessons, and improvements in competencies. They believed that as children participated more during the lessons and handled learning materials, they enjoyed learning more. Teachers suggested that children became more self-confident and expressive due to increased opportunities for participation in the new approach. Their communication skills, oral and written expression, and creative thinking have also improved.

In general, teachers' observations in both countries with regard to the outcomes of the new learning underscored how learning has become more engaging, and how it has contributed to a number of competencies, particularly self-expression and confidence. However, these accounts were based on their perceptions, and need to be substantiated with empirical studies. Besides, it is also important to note that these perceived benefits are enjoyed in greater degree by children who were more active, social and expressive in classrooms. Nevertheless, teachers also mentioned that even the quietest pupils had something to benefit from the new approach.

Although the more 'fun' character of the new learning and the emergence of more 'active' and 'talkative' pupils were confirmed by many

teachers, their opinions have differed substantially when perceived outcomes on learning achievements were discussed. In Uganda, teachers often argued that children learned better with the new curriculum: they learned to read and write more quickly, and their numerical skills have also improved. However, it was difficult to attribute such a perceived outcome to CCP. Indeed, improvements in literacy and numeracy were more frequently attributed to the new content organisation within the Thematic Curriculum and increased emphasis on literacy. In Turkey as well, the attribution problem was evident, as learning achievement was closely linked to the curriculum content and its organisation. Some teachers believed that pupils learned better and they would more likely to retain their knowledge because the curriculum load has been reduced – relieving children from painstaking efforts to memorise dull facts, while the more activity-oriented style of SCP reinforced learning.

However, greater numbers of Turkish teachers had concerns with regard to learning achievement, as they believed that the new curriculum has indeed contributed to less learning. They also made reference to the content and the pedagogical approach of the new curriculum in order to support their arguments. They believed that pupils learned less since the new curriculum put more emphasis on the development of a number of select competencies, thereby marginalising knowledge acquisition. In addition, because of the emphasis of SCP on classroom activities, most of the lesson time was spent on such time-consuming activities without a proper conception of how they are supposed to lead to better learning. Furthermore, the emphasis on the assignments to be completed mostly during out-of-school hours (project, performance, and research assignments) was viewed as ill-conceived as the implementation process has produced some undesirable practices (such as over-involvement of parents and profit-oriented actors) and did not yield the expected learning outcomes.

Another issue that raised serious concerns among Turkish teachers was related to the impact of the new pedagogies on social equality. Several teachers believed that the new curriculum and the pedagogical approach it has endorsed inadvertently exacerbated existing inequalities within the education system. The changes introduced in the textbooks by making them less informative and the shift of attention to the development of competencies at the expense of knowledge acquisition were identified as the main reasons for that. Textbooks are highly important in contexts where access to computers or internet is limited or non-existent, where libraries are not common, and home environments are not academically stimulating. Furthermore, the highly competitive nature of education system forces students to take private

tutoring, which focuses on the development of test-taking skills. This practice tends to aggravate the gap between affluent and low-income populations, as well as with those in remote rural areas who have limited access to such supplementary education opportunities (Simsek & Yildirim, 2004). Therefore, the new curriculum appears to have contributed to widening the disparities in educational opportunities along class and urban/rural divides. Similar criticism has been expressed in different contexts as well. For instance, according to some critics, the experiences with active pedagogies in sub-Saharan Africa have ironically resulted in underutilisation of schools' potential for social change. Since the new pedagogy was essentially a middle-class pedagogy, it did not suit the poor and marginalized content knowledge (Bloch, 2009).

1.5. Implementation challenges: are the new pedagogies feasible?

The classroom realities observed in Uganda and Turkey differed significantly in terms of resource availability and class sizes. Although some classrooms had computers and internet in Turkey, in Uganda some were short of even the most basic needs, such as adequate chairs for students. The class sizes in Turkey were also often half of what was observed in Uganda. Nevertheless, the Ugandan and Turkish teachers appeared almost equally puzzled and overwhelmed by the implementation of the new pedagogies. The majority of teachers in both countries considered the new approaches complex, and viewed their implementation in their national contexts as highly problematical. They believed that the implementation process was constrained by a multitude of issues and problems, raising critical questions with regard to their feasibility. However, in both contexts, teachers who had positive views about the new pedagogies suggested that although the result of their implementation will differ from the result in the West, it can still yield benefits over time. The challenges highlighted by teachers are briefly outlined below. These issues are important to consider since they have shaped the indigenised versions of 'progressive pedagogies'.

1.5.1. Inadequate teacher training

Most Ugandan and Turkish teachers received ten days of training prior to the piloting, which enabled them to be only minimally acquainted with the main features of the new curricula. Teachers in both contexts appeared very critical of teacher training because of its short duration and low quality. Teachers

were introduced to different aspects of the new curricula over a relatively short period of time, and training was often done via dry, theoretical presentations. Lack of demonstrations and practical guidance on how the new pedagogies could be applied in classrooms were considered serious shortcomings. In the Turkish case, the training period also appeared to be dominated by heated discussions between the trainers and teachers on the new curriculum. As a result, by the time teachers started with the actual implementation, they felt ill-prepared and inadequate in both countries. The lack of a sound and thorough basis of the new pedagogies led to confusion, frustration, and wide differences in interpretation and teacher practices. Furthermore, teachers also commented that teachers in non-pilot schools received an even shorter and more formalistic training, suggesting that their preparation for the new curriculum was even more problematical.

1.5.2. Large classes

Class size was mentioned as one of the biggest implementation challenges in both countries. In Uganda, the average class size in visited schools was 70, and some classrooms had up to 108 pupils. Teachers described the difficulties of teaching in such overcrowded classes, and suggested that CCP has intensified those challenges, as the recommended teaching methods, such as student participation, learning by doing, and group work were time consuming and difficult to organise. It was also difficult, if not impossible, to pay individual attention to children during a half-hour learning lesson, and to follow student progress and provide adequate feedback. Classroom observations have also confirmed that teachers struggled to maintain order in the classroom. In Turkey, the average class size was 36 in visited schools, and the maximum was 49. Nevertheless, their complaints regarding the class size resonated with their Ugandan colleagues. They strongly believed that SCP required small class sizes since student participation, activities, and hands-on learning were time consuming and increased demands on teacher attention. It was also difficult to let each student speak in the classroom. The expectations of policymakers regarding implementing SCP in large classes were simply viewed as unrealistic.

1.5.3. Materials scarcity

The new pedagogies appeared to increase the demand for learning aids in both countries. The use of learning aids was viewed as helpful to reinforce

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learning activities with visual aids, to stimulate the development of select competencies, and to make learning fun. Yet teachers in both contexts were frustrated with lack of adequate materials, even though as pilot schools they were in a more advantageous situation in comparison to other public schools. Material needs were framed differently since Ugandan teachers were more concerned about lack of textbooks, visual aids (e.g. flash cards, sentence cards, and wall charts), and story books, while Turkish teachers made frequent references to computers, internet, TV, digital learning materials, and stationery needs for cutting and pasting types of classroom activities. In Uganda, teachers complained about the high cost of materials, limited supply of printed materials, the inadequacy of school budget allocated for the purchase of learning aids, the inability of students to provide some of the basic materials, and the time and effort teachers spent on developing learning aids.

Teachers in Turkey also commented on the insufficient school budgets for providing learning aids and the implications of resorting to parents to provide for the material needs. Indeed, despite the rhetoric on free public education at primary level, parents have been increasingly required to provide financial means for a range of items, including desks, seats, curtains, story books, and ICT hardware. Such practices not only increased the financial burden of education on family budgets but also created new forms of inequalities within the education system. This has produced highly differentiated school conditions and has created visible differences and inequalities between schools or even between classrooms in a single school, as observed during school visits. Subsequently, classroom equipment and furnishing became indicators of students' socio-economic status and parental commitment to education. This trend appears to contribute to increased educational stratification and intensification of hidden privatisation (Ball & Youdell, 2008), turning public schools into private-like schools and leading to some extreme cases parental contribution to education (Karapehlivan, 2010).

1.5.4. Examination system

Nationwide exams for entrance to post-primary education pose an important challenge to the implementation of constructivist pedagogy in many contexts because of contradictions between the objectives of a constructivist curriculum (e.g. the development of skills and competencies) and what is assessed during exams (knowledge acquisition). Such contradictions and tensions persist in both Uganda and Turkey, signalling a lack of educational

policy alignment. In both countries, success is defined by exam performance. So even if school management, teachers and parents would value development of abilities, skills and competencies, if pupils cannot make the transition to good quality post-primary education institutions, then the intrinsic value of such competencies becomes questionable.

In Uganda, after completing primary education, pupils take the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) to qualify for admission to the secondary schools. The exam causes significant anxiety and stress for schools, children, and parents. As one official explained, the PLE is very high stakes in Uganda: 'People are struggling to get into very few places. Politicians and parents put pressure on head teachers and teachers. They even threaten their jobs,' Such substantial pressure on and expectations of students and schools have implications for the implementation of CCP because teaching and learning strategies that are perceived to have little impact on student achievement in national examinations are unlikely to be fully implemented and sustained.

Exams are also embedded in the Turkish education system since entrance to secondary schools and higher education institutions are governed by nationwide exams (Tansel & Bircan, 2006). All primary school graduates are eligible to study at secondary schools. Despite the availability of a wide variety of choice in general, vocational, and technical schools, competition is intense for distinguished *Anatolian high schools* and *Science high schools* due to their reputation for offering high quality education in foreign languages. These exams have traditionally assessed pupils on the basis of their knowledge acquisition. Therefore, teachers believed that SCP has reduced mainstream schools' capacity to prepare children adequately. The Ministry modified exam questions in 2008 to better align the examination with constructivist education, and although some teachers appreciated these changes, the majority did not appear to be convinced. Teachers reported that several parents were also concerned about the new curriculum, as they believed schools have become less equipped to prepare pupils for the nationwide exams. As a result, some parents enrolled their children at private tutoring institutions after school hours or in the weekends. These school-like institutions teach with an eye to the test and their curriculum closely reflects exam content. The majority of teachers in this study were teaching pupils from a low socio-economic background. Since good private tutoring institutions are costly, these children had a lower chance of receiving private tutoring. Therefore, teachers believed that the revised curriculum was exacerbating their disadvantages.

Examinations are key characteristics of many education systems in the developing world. The selection function of education has a strong effect on the quality of the curriculum and learning, and it remains rather difficult to resist making examinations paramount, since examination success provides access to improved livelihoods and life-chances. In China, for instance, although studies show a positive teacher attitude towards SCP, they also highlight that teachers find it almost impossible to use SCP due to pressure coming from parents and school management to have students perform well in standardised exams. Hence, teachers hardly dare to use innovative teaching methodologies or to depart too much from the prescribed curriculum for the entrance examination (Liu & Dunne, 2009). Increasing numbers of educated youth intensify competition for universities and the political economy of many countries reinforces an exam-oriented education system.

1.5.5. Language proficiency

The medium of instruction was raised as an important concern among Ugandan teachers. Similar to several other African countries, Uganda adopted the colonial language, English, as the official language and the language of instruction at schools. The Thematic Curriculum introduced the use of local languages as the language of instruction at lower grades; however, all schools continued to teach in English in Kampala due to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the city. Use of English was viewed as an impediment in practicing CCP since several children, particularly those who had migrated from rural areas, were poor in English. Consequently, their participation and interaction with teachers and other pupils were limited. In observed classrooms, some pupils appeared to be fluent in English, while some others had had no prior exposure to English. Children who had been to nursery schools spoke better English, and those who migrated from the North or the East had the most difficulties in comprehending it.

Teachers noted that such pupils were often quiet during lessons and had learning difficulties because of poor language proficiency. Some teachers allowed children to speak in their local languages during News and Story hours, and they observed dramatic differences in student participation. In Turkey, a number of other languages are also spoken in addition to Turkish, the official language, which is spoken widely throughout the country. None of the teachers in visited schools had pupils who were poor in Turkish, yet some reflected on their experiences in rural areas, especially in the East, where it was possible to encounter children with poor language skills in Turkish.

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1.5.6. Teacher- related factors

In Uganda, teacher-related issues that impeded implementation of CCP included low teacher motivation and morale, inadequate salaries, low teacher status, and unfavourable living conditions. The Ugandan teachers indicated that the new pedagogical approach made further demands on teachers by asking them to engage children in learning more, and by being more innovative and creative in their teaching. However, teachers suggested that many of them lacked the motivation and energy to engage fully in educational change process. They reported alarmingly low teacher morale as a major factor, which was viewed as an outcome of low teacher salaries, lack of incentives, the low social status of the teaching profession, and inadequate living and working conditions. Teachers maintained that financial difficulties preoccupied them, and interfered with their health and well-being.

In Turkey, few teachers raised such issues as a challenge to curriculum implementation, yet they referred to teacher resistance to change proposals as a critical issue. Resistance to change was typically attributed to teachers who were relatively senior in age and who had many years of experience (more than 20 years). Some teachers argued that instead of organising classroom activities, senior teachers continued to rely on more traditional methods of direct teaching, because they viewed change as tiring and demanding. These teachers were also 'problematised' during interviews with policymakers, who openly suggested that once senior teachers had left the system, constructivism would be more widely endorsed. However, interview accounts have shown that extensive reliance on classroom activities and over-emphasis of competencies were criticised by many teachers. Indeed, the majority of them did not approve of the substantial reductions in content load and tended to supplement it with direct teaching due to concerns with students' academic success, nationwide examinations, the increasing demand for private tutoring, deepening educational inequalities, and the development of a diffuse sense of national identity among new generations. Therefore, these teachers demonstrated *principled resistance* (Achinstein, & Ogawa, 2006), since they perceived curriculum change proposals as detrimental to their students and to society in general.

1.5.7. Parental opposition

In both countries, teachers encountered some parental opposition to the revised curriculum and concerns associated with the progressive pedagogies.

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In Uganda, partly because of inadequate public sensitisation prior to the implementation, parents were reported to be confused, ambivalent, or displeased with the new curriculum. Parental complaints involved a number of issues, such as the replacement of subject-based system with learning areas, the overlap with early-childhood education, and the assessment system. They considered the subject-based system superior, as they believed students were provided with more factual knowledge. For these parents, the new curriculum was a simplified version of the previous one; hence, it was viewed as less challenging. Additionally, since the new system encouraged active learning, learning by doing, group activities and play, children were less involved with copying things from the blackboard. Yet for several parents written exercises were primary indicators of teaching and learning. Therefore, some also complained that children were not learning, that they were mostly talking, singing, drawing, or playing. Some of those parents who were displeased with the new system took drastic measures and transferred their children to private schools where implementation of the Thematic Curriculum was delayed. Almost all schools in this study reported student transfers to private schools or the threat of transfers.

In Turkey, teachers also reported some parental dissatisfaction with the new curriculum. Curriculum 2004 highlights the importance of parental involvement in education and strives to improve their participation by assigning some key responsibilities to them, especially in out-of-school learning activities (MONE, 2005a). Therefore, as underscored by the Ministry as well, providing adequate information to parents was crucial. Nevertheless, teachers reported inadequacies in that area: although some schools arranged extensive meetings with parents at school or class level, in some other schools, such activities were limited. According to teachers, insufficient information generated misconceptions, confusion, and even reactionary attitudes among parents. For instance, many repeatedly complained about the number of performance and project assignments, suggesting that they were tired of 'helping out' their children.

Several parents also appeared to be concerned with the education quality: they were critical of the new curriculum for over-emphasizing competencies, and paying inadequate attention to knowledge acquisition. Parents believed that children did not learn much in the new system, as too much classroom time was spent on classroom activities. Some parents openly challenged the teachers, arguing that 'Children are empty, they do not learn', and they tried to put pressure on teachers to supplement the curriculum with additional information and to spend more time on lecturing. This kind of

pressure particularly came from parents who perceived education as an important social mobility mechanism, and who seemed to be concerned about the mismatches between the mainstream schooling and secondary school entrance exams.

2. Implications for educational policy and reform

2.1. Context matters

As Crossley and Watson (2003, p. 142) have suggested:

> Today, the most frequent criticism of organizations like the World Bank, who are actively engaged in transfer, is their continued insensitivity to local context. What is striking about all of this is that despite the paramount importance many in the field place on context in the transfer puzzle, there has been relatively little attempt − notwithstanding a few notable exceptions − to move beyond the commonplace assertion that "context matters".

Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi (2010, p. 331) argues that very often, reform failures are not due to technicalities, limited funding, or implementation problems. Rather, such failures reflect 'the fundamental contradictions that arise when (policy) solutions are borrowed from educational systems where the problems are entirely different'.

This study has demonstrated that context mediates reform implementation to a large extent. When context is not adequately considered in education policy transfer, it may lead to negative or unintended outcomes. In Turkey, the case of research assignments or the revision in textbooks illustrates the importance of considering context adequately. When learning is increasingly directed towards student research (with the assumed benefits in terms of rendering students autonomous learners and preparing them for life-long learning), in a country where access to information resources is uneven, or very limited in some regions or for certain segments of society, then such a policy threatens children's right to education and undermines their learning opportunities. Likewise, when textbooks are scrapped, so too is essential information on studied topics in a country where they are the primary and often 'the only' reference book for millions of students. Such a policy then also further exacerbates educational inequalities and marginalises students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. As Carnoy and Rhoten confirm:

Policies prescribed by the same paradigm but applied in different contexts produce different practices – so different in some cases – that it is difficult to imagine that they were the result of the same policy. By ignoring differences in contextual capacity and culture at the national, regional, and local levels, globalization has resulted in some unintended and unexpected consequences for educational practice that in some cases have contributed to the deterioration of quality even when the objective has been improvement (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p. 6).

2.2. Policy alignment

The study has shown that when a new education policy (e.g. curriculum emphasis on the development of competencies) contradicts another newly introduced policy or an existing policy (e.g. nationwide exams governing the transition to post-primary education), then the implementation of the new policy will encounter serious setbacks. As Napier (2003) suggests within the context of South Africa, reform implementation becomes particularly complicated if multiple sets of reforms are introduced at the same time, when these reforms may conflict with one another, and when reforms are fast-paced.

Both in Uganda and Turkey, the development of competencies is considered important by teachers, but as long as the highly selective nationwide exams continue to assess students on the basis of knowledge acquisition, the teachers are confronted with a dilemma. As a result, several Turkish teachers who participated in this study preferred to resist the policy and focused on practices that would better aid and prepare students for the exams. Likewise, authentic assessment with its objectives to move beyond testing has certain evident benefits; however, pupils who remain in mainstream schools become disadvantaged as they are less exposed to testing based on multiple choices. Yet, this type of testing is used to select pupils at the end of primary school. In Turkey, increasing numbers of pupils applied to private-tutoring centres to gain test-solving skills. Therefore, alignment of the new policies with existing or other new policies should be carefully examined, and possible conflict between them should be eliminated. The theory on education reform implementation could also consider policy alignment to be one of the factors that determine whether or not a proposed policy is implemented.

2.3. Teacher agency in reform implementation

Implementation of education policies is far from straightforward since teachers play a key role in mediating policies. Therefore, successful policy implementation requires appropriate strategies or models of policy construction that utilise teachers' professional knowledge, skills and values, rather than those that challenge or fail to recognize these crucial aspects. This calls for a move away from pure top-down or bottom-up approaches in policymaking towards a more balanced one, which involves consultation with teachers and provision of resources that would enable them to use their professional skills appropriately (Brain, Reid & Boyes, 2006). As Schweisfurth (2002, p. 22) argues:

> Reform which ignores the complexities and value-laden nature of education, which prescribes innovations to teachers while remaining stubbornly naive of their realities, and which alienates implementers in the process, seems by definition and by historical and comparative evidence to be doomed to failure (or, at best, very limited success).

Therefore, not only teachers but also school management as well as inspectors should be well informed about the philosophy, content, and implementation of the new curriculum, and they should be involved in the curriculum design and adaptation process through on-going consultation.

2.4. Beyond a polarised and one-size-fits all approach to pedagogy

A one-size-fits-all approach to pedagogy fails to recognise that pedagogy is 'both the act of teaching and the discourse in which it is embedded' (Alexander, 2001b, p. 507). Since teaching and learning are contextualised activities, there can be no justification for a universal and homogenising pedagogy (Tabulawa, 2003). Furthermore, positioning the notions of teacher-centred and student-centred learning in opposite locations and making bipolar comparisons between them run the risk of oversimplification (Scheerens & Sleegers, 2010; Edwards & Usher, 2008). As Alexander (2001b) suggests, the pedagogical models should be as far removed as they can be from the crude and normative polarising of 'teacher-centred' (or subject-centred) and 'child-centred teaching'. Therefore, mainstream comparative research should abandon this dichotomy. According to Alexander, 'Perhaps the most damaging residue of this sort of thinking can still be found in the reports of some development education consultants, who happily commend Western

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'child-centred' pedagogy to non-Western governments without regard for local cultural and educational circumstances' (Alexander, 2001b, p.512). Based on his *The Culture and Pedagogy* research in five countries, Alexander proposes six pedagogical approaches as alternatives to pedagogical polarities: teaching as transmission, teaching as initiation, teaching as negotiation, teaching as facilitation, teaching as acceleration, and teaching as technology. These six versions of teaching constitute a continuum of tendencies rather than a set of distinct national descriptions (Alexander, 2008).

3. Suggestions for future research

3.1. Rationale of international actors in diffusing a particular pedagogical approach

A variety of actors have been involved in diffusing constructivism in low-income countries, including international organisations, bilateral donors, NGOs and foundations. Their motives and objectives in prescribing pedagogical approaches associated with constructivism have differed substantially. Although the majority of the studies explain the popularity of such approaches by making reference to their actual or perceived effectiveness and better fit with knowledge economies, some others raised important questions with regard to their rapid diffusion after the fall of the Soviet bloc (see Carney, 2008a; Tabulawa, 2003). These latter studies suggested a different rationale by linking CCP with, for instance, the promotion of a weak or thin democratic system and the spread of capitalism. I believe that, instead of dismissing such arguments as 'conspiracy' theory, it would be interesting to study the motives of international actors, particularly those who have been actively involved in diffusing CCP since the 1990s (particularly USAID). Such studies could help to substantiate (or dismiss) arguments relating to the spread of the liberal capitalist order and may also disclose some other hidden, untold motives. As Ball (1998) argues, in relation to patterns of convergence in education policy, it is important to consider 'Whose interests are served?' and, 'In what ways?'.

One of the interesting claims in this respect is that CCP might be linked to reducing the need for qualified teachers and decreasing teaching hours at higher levels of education. One might argue that teachers' subject matter and didactic knowledge may no longer be so important in learning environments in which students are expected to be self-directed, autonomous learners, and teachers are expected to be 'mentors' who supervise learning

processes. Within the context of the Netherlands, Volman for instance refers to the arguments suggesting that the teacher shortages within the country might be solved by replacing teachers with computers or by self-directed learners who can manage with fewer teachers. This might imply the creation of new positions with lower levels of qualifications in order to support teachers (Volman, 2005). Indeed, the introduction of 'new learning' approaches in the Dutch secondary schools has resulted in increases in the employment of teaching assistants in recent years. Likewise, the appetite for CCP might increase at higher education institutions as they are pressured to assign less teaching hours to academic staff because of shrinking budgets. Then, one might ask if − within the context of developing countries − CCP is also considered to be a (partial) solution to chronic teacher shortages and a long-term strategy to alleviate the 'heavy burden' of teacher salaries on Ministry budgets.

3.2. Mechanisms of educational policy transfer

This study did not focus on the mechanisms of educational policy transfer, and made only brief reference to them. Therefore, it would be highly interesting to study the mechanisms that operated in Uganda and Turkey from a comparative perspective. Dale's framework would be highly useful in such a comparative analysis, as it captures the variety of mechanisms (both voluntary and non-voluntary) and highlights the complexity of the process (see Dale 1999). In this sense, I think Verger's application of the framework in his study on the education liberalisation process within the WTO is inspirational (Verger, 2010; 2009).

3.3. Understanding teacher resistance to education reforms

An important element in teacher resistance to reforms in the case of Turkey relates to teachers' political views. This was discussed during interviews but not highlighted throughout this book at the request of teachers. Their political affiliations, concerns for the future of the secular and democratic regime because of 'possible' intentions and actions of the current government, and other criticism directed at the government appear to have influenced some teachers' attitudes towards the new curriculum and their classroom practices. Although this study could not discuss these highly sensitive issues, I find it very important to study the political issues surrounding implementation of a new curriculum in a context such as Turkey. Such a study might examine the

types of resistance (e.g. overt or covert), the outcomes of the resistance, as well as the personal benefits and costs of resistance. Another point of reference in studying teacher resistance could be looking at how teachers in a given school interact and communicate regarding their criticism of a reform proposal, and how collegial relationships influence teachers' attitudes towards reforms. This would be highly interesting to explore in both Uganda and Turkey.

4. Overall concluding remarks: A critique of the new 'progressive' pedagogies

In one of her articles that considers the knowledge-based economy, Susan Robertson asks 'Who can be against knowledge?', and points to the fact that the idea of knowledge 'is able to articulate with progressive left as well as right projects' (Robertson, 2007, p. 6). Following the same line of thinking, I would like to ask: Who can be against student-/child-centred pedagogy? Who can be opposed to a pedagogical approach that claims to stimulate creativity, critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration, learning to learn, and activity? It is particularly difficult to resist such a 'progressive' pedagogy in a 'knowledge-based economic order' which places a high premium on innovation, invention, flexibility, life-long learning and cooperative work. Similar to how the notions of knowledge and decentralisation might do so, 'progressive pedagogies' are indeed able to articulate with the left as well as the right.

Turkey's experiences with 'progressive pedagogies' illustrate this point clearly. When the Village Institutes were established in the 1940s based on the recommendations of John Dewey, they were soon criticised for stimulating leftist ideas and spreading communism. After more than fifty years, a government which has initiated wide-ranging changes in order to advance neoliberal policies in Turkey has adopted SCP as the official pedagogical approach for all primary schools. Yet teachers, intellectuals, and academics who were once educated in the Village Institutes or who praise them appear to be bitterly critical of the new pedagogical approach. Likewise, the leftist teacher union is also opposed to the pedagogical reform, together with many of its teacher members. How can we explain these seemingly paradoxical developments? Have the left and the right subsumed one another in Turkey – or elsewhere − as some commentators and policymakers claim?

In an attempt to respond to this question, I want to first highlight the fact that although the narratives of different experiences with 'progressive

pedagogies' resonate with one another, a closer look reveals a great deal of difference. Therefore, the Village Institutes and the current SCP in Turkey are in fact different in many regards even if they were both inspired by Dewey's educational ideas and incorporated principles such as hands-on-learning, participation, stimulation of critical thinking and creativity, and so on. What is different and possibly very interesting about the current diffusion of pedagogical approaches based on constructivism is the correspondence between the 'progressive pedagogy' and a number of neoliberal policies advanced in the education sector in many parts of the world. In this respect, Allais (2010) suggests that together with the qualifications framework, competency-based education, and outcomes-based curriculum, the 'progressive pedagogy' constitutes part of a 'new educational paradigm'. She identifies a number of problems with this 'new paradigm', such as the lack of empirical research and even less positive evidence, conceptual incoherence, flawed underlying epistemology, and its being based on a notion of labour markets, economies, and employers which is implausible.

As such, Allais (2010) argues that the 'progressivism' (and social constructivism in particular), appears to facilitate economic imperialism. She explains the interplay between the two by referring to three main aspects of 'progressivism': 1) the emphasis on the role of the individual, individual choice and the individual constructing their own knowledge; 2) downplaying and denying structure, such as the structure of knowledge, the structure of educational institutions, and societal structures which make access to education highly unequal; and 3) emptying education of its specificity by abandoning a notion of the acquisition of knowledge as the main purpose of education, and the notion that knowledge needs specific institutional structures for its development and acquisition.

Indeed, the rhetoric of reforms aimed at constructivist education disguises the way in which this philosophy actually reinforces an essentially conservative notion of education. This approach has been criticised by a number of other scholars: for offering more subtle classroom techniques for exercising wide-ranging powers over students (Darling, 1978); for providing a more effective tool for social control and structuring aspirations (Sharp & Green, 1975); for undermining educational advancement of working class children because of its critique of book-based education (Jones, 1983); and for being a means of further repression or accommodation, even if it starts with an assertion of human liberation (Schapiro, 1984). Furthermore, with its egalitarian sentiment and vague talk of valuing the individual, this approach avoids perceiving education as a tool for changing society. As Darling (1986)

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explains, psychologists provide increasingly sophisticated accounts of how children actually do develop; however, this is no substitute for the question: 'How do we want them to develop?' One of the symptoms of constructivist education is the great reluctance of teachers to intervene, to direct, or to criticise when they are dealing with children. Nevertheless, furthering the aim of a just and equal society requires teachers who are prepared to challenge some of the observed patterns of children. In this respect, Young (2010b) also suggests that:

> Mass schooling, as a core institution of modernity [...] is a unique opportunity for students at any age – to acquire what I will call 'powerful knowledge' – knowledge that they would not have access to at home or at work and knowledge that takes them beyond their experience.

The current trends in education policies emphasize the extension of access to and widening of participation in education. However, at the same time, they neglect or in some cases actually deny that at the most fundamental level, education involves the transmission of 'powerful knowledge' from one generation to another. This implies that teachers should not only be facilitators or guides in classrooms, but should also be a − to use an unfashionable term − 'transmitter of knowledge' (Young, 2010b; Young, 2008). Because of these considerations, I want to suggest − on a final note − that instead of being preoccupied with the problems and challenges of implementing the new 'progressive pedagogies' in low-income countries and identifying 'best implementation practices' in under-resourced schools, we should raise more questions such as these: How and by whom is the new 'progressive pedagogy' formulated? For whom does it work? Under what circumstances? And with what outcomes? These questions are highly important to consider, since pedagogy is not neutral and should be 'understood in terms of questions of power, politics, and ideology, both within and beyond schools' (Young, 2008, p. 2).