

Education reform in the twenty-first century: declining emphases in international organisation reports, 1998–2018

Patricia Bromley , Lisa Overbey , Jared Furuta & Rie Kijima

To cite this article: Patricia Bromley , Lisa Overbey , Jared Furuta & Rie Kijima (2020): Education reform in the twenty-first century: declining emphases in international organisation reports, 1998–2018, Globalisation, Societies and Education, DOI: [10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159](https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159>



Published online: 09 Sep 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 53



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Education reform in the twenty-first century: declining emphases in international organisation reports, 1998–2018*

Patricia Bromley^a, Lisa Overbey^a, Jared Furuta^a and Rie Kijima^b

^aGraduate School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, USA; ^bOntario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

ABSTRACT

The liberal and neoliberal world order is increasingly under attack. Global levels of democracy have been declining for over a decade, accompanied by rollbacks in some kinds of rights. We examine the implications of increasing criticisms of the (neo)-liberal era over time for educational reform discourse around the world by drawing on a unique primary dataset of 473 reports produced by international organisations between 1998 and 2018. Extending insights from neo-institutional theories of organisations, we argue that globalised models of education reform is on a decline as a result of growing attacks on the (neo)-liberal cultural system that has affected education policies around the world. Empirically, we find no evidence that reform emphases continue to grow since the 1990s, and support for arguments that predict stagnant or falling levels of reform discourse.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 February 2020

Accepted 24 August 2020

Introduction

In the wake of World War II, international organisations built on liberal principles of international cooperation, such as the World Bank, United Nations, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, have emerged to become active promoters of education reform (McNeely 1995; Mundy and Verger 2015). However, the liberal and later neoliberal world order that legitimated these organisations, including their education reform agendas, is increasingly under attack (Guillén 2018; Norris and Inglehart 2019). For example, global levels of democracy have been declining for over a decade (Diamond, Plattner, and Rice 2015) accompanied by rollbacks in some kinds of rights (Hadler and Symons 2018). Trust in capitalism is falling (Foroohar 2016), civil society is increasingly threatened (Bromley, Schofer, and Longhofer 2020), and growth in higher education enrolments is slowing (Schofer, Meyer, and Lerch 2020).

How do these attacks on the (neo)-liberal order shape levels of global discourse on education reform? Extending insights from neo-institutional theories of organisations (Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006), we posit that a weakening of the (neo)-liberal cultural system in recent years will be linked to reduced emphases on education reform as a theme in international organisation discourse. To test our prediction of decelerating emphases on education reform discourse in international organisations, we draw on a unique primary dataset of 473 reports discussing the education systems of 146 countries produced over the period 1998–2018. The reports are created in collaboration with a country and they contain discussion of a national education system, including reforms. For example, a 2016 World Bank report for China describes the following reform, ‘The *National Outline for Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*

CONTACT Patricia Bromley  Pbromley@stanford.edu  485 Lasuen Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA

*For consideration in the special issue on ‘Organizational Perspectives on Globalization in Education’

has set targets of achieving preschool enrollment for 95 percent of five-year-olds, 80 percent for four-year-olds, and 70 percent for three-year-olds by 2020' (World Bank 2017, 10). The 47 page report discusses several other reforms, and includes non-reform details such as a general overview of the country's economic and educational context, and a conceptual framework for establishing and evaluating policy goals. In tracking the number of reforms mentioned in each report, we find support for arguments that predict stagnant or falling levels of reform discourse.

Background: post-War global education reform

Globally, the period since the end of World War II is characterised by massive amounts of education reform in countries around the world (Mundy et al. 2016; Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016). A wave of reform from the 1950s to 1970s, in what is often called the *liberal* era, was propelled by a vision of an international order that emphasised the central role of education for promoting societal progress (e.g., Furuta 2020; Lerch, Bromley, and Meyer 2020). Consolidated liberal democracies experienced substantial education reforms in the post-War period, as did many developing countries¹, where reform was often included as an integral part of broader national development plans (Chabbott 2003; Hwang 2006). These early reforms often focused on expansion and access to education (Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer 1985; Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992; Schofer and Meyer 2005).

In the *neoliberal* period that started in the 1980s, another wave of education reform swept the world, often reflecting free market principles of decentralisation, privatisation, and deregulation (Adamson, Astrand, and Darling-Hammond 2016). During the same period especially from the 1990s, the Education for All (EFA) movement emerged out of, and further generated, an unprecedented level of cooperation among multilateral agencies and governments to increase access and quality in education (Mundy 2007; Mundy and Manion 2014). EFA built on the post-WWII liberal period of increased multilateral cooperation for educational expansion and reform where basic education was established as a key tenet of human rights and legislative changes around the world enshrined compulsory schooling (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992; Chabbott 2003). Many reforms



Figure 1. Google Ngram of term 'education reform', 1950–2019.

Notes: (a) Y-axis values scaled at 1×10^4 . (b) Figure shows the percentage of all bigrams in the Google Books Ngram corpus that are 'education reform' (Google 2020).

during this period framed education as a fundamental and universal right for empowered individuals (Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan 1997; Bajaj 2011) and impacted the development of national curricula and standard-setting (Berkovich 2019).

Illustrating this broad wave of attention to education reform in the post-war period, [Figure 1](#) shows the increasing relative frequency of the words ‘education reform’ since 1950 in the Google Books Ngram Corpus (Google 2020).²

International organisations have been key actors in the diffusion of education reforms to countries around the world (McNeely 1995; Chabbot 2003). The World Bank, for example, has been a powerful force in spreading the view of education as a form of human capital (Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist 2012). The Bank has pressed, at times with aggressive coercion, for the spread of neo-liberal policies in education, such as decentralisation, vouchers, and privatisation of educational services (Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker 2002; Mundy 2002; Heyneman 2003). Also influential, but through normative influence rather than economic coercion, UNESCO has been a renowned ‘teacher of norms’ (Finnemore 1993). UNESCO has had a central role in spreading conceptions of education linked to liberal concepts such as human rights, democracy, and individual empowerment (Suárez, Ramirez, and Koo 2009). Similarly, the OECD provides countries with impetus to reform via the pressures of normative power through discursive controls (Berkovich and Benoliel 2018, 2019) and as a result of participation in international assessments like their Programme in International Student Assessment (PISA) (Bieber and Martens 2011; Sellar and Lingard 2014). Overall, international organisations are central carriers of liberal and neoliberal cultural principles, and have been central in promoting education reform to national systems around the world.

Theories of education reform

While there is broad agreement about the rise of a global wave of education reforms through the liberal and neoliberal eras, scholars disagree on the underlying causes of reform. For many, the impetus to reform is self-evident: to operate optimally school systems need to be re-designed to meet obvious goals that arise as a natural form of ‘progress’ (Colclough 1996; Adamson, Åstrand, and Darling-Hammond 2016). For others, reform is a venue for powerful actors to pursue or maintain their own material gains (Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016). Both of these functional views assume a reform ‘does’ something, either serving the material interests of the powerful or improving society. An alternative lens, rooted in neo-institutional theory, posits that emphases on education reform emerge worldwide due to the globalisation of liberal cultural ideologies that valorise education as the path to progress and justice (Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer 1985; Meyer et al. 1997). In this view, education reform is largely an enactment of cultural principles that valorise individuals.

Functionalisms: managerialist and critical views

Functionalist conceptions of reform are often tied to the economy, as well as social and political goals: Arnove (2005) provides a useful framework for organising the stated goals of reforms into economic and political-cultural aims that come from top-down and bottom-up sources. In one version of functionalism – what could be called a managerial view of reform – the core issue is to find the most efficient and effective policies and ensure proper implementation. Although these sorts of arguments, which assert that organisations and social structures can, and should, be built to efficiently achieve specified purposes, seem natural today, they became central only starting in the early twentieth century, often under the label of ‘Taylorism’ or ‘Scientific Management’ (e.g., Taylor 1919). These views are built on conceptions of society and organisations as machine-like structures that can be engineered in an optimal way. For example, focusing on an economic rationale, Sahlberg (2006) explains:

Many recent large-scale education reforms have been justified by the urgent need to increase labour productivity and promote economic development and growth through expanded and improved education. It is generally assumed that to increase economic competitiveness, citizens must acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for civic success and the knowledge-based economy (p.259).

Critical views reject the assumption that reforms appear as a simple matter of efficiency, effectiveness, or pursuit of the broader public good; instead they assert that education reforms stem from material political and economic self-interest (Ball 1994; Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016). Many political accounts are locally and nationally rooted, predicting patterns of reform that are linked to local politics and election cycles (e.g., Debeauvais and Livesey 1986; Katz 2001). For example, Finger (2018) shows that in the U.S., political interest groups (teachers unions) can dampen reform diffusion, conditional on unsympathetic policymakers. Some have extended these more critical arguments about reform to the global level, arguing that those with power shape policy in ways that perpetuate their status (Ball 2007; Silova and Steiner-Khamsi 2008; Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo 2016). Direct resource dependencies on other countries likely matter: for instance, Official Development Assistance may 'generate or alleviate pressure to reform' in ways that align with donor interests (Steiner-Khamsi 2010, 331). Critical accounts provide an explanation for why the same 'reforms return again and again' (Cuban 1990, 3) in dysfunctional patterns of 'reformitis' (Zaff 2011).

While functional views, including managerial and critical variants, partly explain the articulation of national level reforms in some instances, they do not fully account for the trends we see at the global level in a number of ways. To begin, the managerial view of education fails to account for the fact that reforms are often highly contested (Grindle 2004; Berkovich 2011). Unlike the relative clarity around what a smoothly running assembly line or machine looks like, diagnosing problems and solutions in the field of education is murky territory. For example, reforms have often failed to improve the conditions of those who would benefit the most (Farrell 2007). In organisation theory terms, educational reforms are highly 'decoupled', with large disconnects between formal policies and actual practices, and between stated goals or means and actual outcomes or ends (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Bromley and Powell 2012; Buckner, Spencer, and Cha 2018). Moreover, for both critical and managerial views there is little explanation for how these goals (of either progress or material interest) are achieved if decoupling and implementation failures are routine. For example, managerial views posit that reforms are articulated in order to increase public accountability; however, reforms are implemented with little accountability for effective and efficient usages of public resources (Galal 2008).

Finally, critical and managerial views are unable to account for striking global patterns of national policy reform that bears little connection to the material interests of elites or local condition (Meyer et al. 1997). Policy reforms diffuse across countries in spite of vastly idiosyncratic national educational, economic, and political needs and interests (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007). For example, there is global diffusion of educational reforms around all kinds of human rights and environmentalism that are intended to empower and protect vulnerable populations rather than benefit elites, as in the Education For All agenda or the United Nations' recent Sustainable Development Goals.

Neoinstitutionalism in organizational sociology

Neoinstitutional theorists in organisational sociology offer a rationale for why we observe patterns in national education reform at a global scale. This approach argues that, especially under conditions of uncertainty, actors' definitions of their interests and their perceptions of appropriate or legitimate action are constructed by social and cultural signals from their environment (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Meyer 2010). In this account, much action occurs as a result of taken-for-granted beliefs, rather than as a strategic response to economic or political needs and interests. Actors are, at best, boundedly rational (March 1978).

Rationalized global environment. A neo-institutional perspective argues that worldwide waves of education reform are linked to a particular global historical and cultural context, which changes over time generating waves of reform. Starting after World War II and expanding especially through the 1980s and 1990s, the institutional environment for nation-states became highly rationalised and globalised, following universalistic principles of individual empowerment and expanded human rights that are linked to (neo)-liberal ideologies (Meyer et al. 1997; Drori, Meyer, and Schofer 2003; Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006).³ For instance, growing numbers of cross-national assessments, such as PISA and TIMSS, create standardised frameworks for comparing achievement in all sorts of education systems (Kijima and Lipsky 2020). And in many countries, participation in cross-national assessments have given them the justification to alter the course of their existing reforms or to provide further support for existing ones. Relatedly, an outpouring of education research created by international organisations like the World Bank and OECD encourages countries to make evidence-based policy decisions (Wiseman 2010; Zapp 2017). While many reforms of the era imposed increasingly scientized visions of education, others focused on empowerment and inclusion, such as the global decline of early tracking (e.g., Furuta 2020). This conceptualisation of reform as a social construction helps to explain: (a) its persistence despite common observations of the ‘predictable’ and ‘persistent’ failure of education reform (Sarason 1990; Payne 2008), and (b) the loose ties between many reforms and the material interests of elites.

However, there is mounting evidence that the dominance of world culture is waning. By many accounts, we have entered a ‘post-liberal’ era characterised by the intensification of imageries of solidarity groups (rather than individualism) and stratification (rather than equality) (Jackson and Grusky 2018). Just as the end of World War II and later fall of the Soviet Union provided a foundation for the globalisation of a (neo)-liberal world order, events and social changes, such as the 2008 financial crisis, increasing income inequality, growing anti-democratic attitudes, and a global pandemic likely contribute to the ongoing erosion of a globalised (neo)-liberal society (e.g., Colgan and Keohane 2017; Allison 2018).

As the legitimacy of universalistic (neo)-liberal ideologies⁴ declines in recent decades, models of education are less likely to develop and diffuse globally unless a dominant alternative global culture emerges. Alternative cultural bases, especially ones that are less scientized or more illiberal, are predicted to generate less global education reform (cf. Bromley and Meyer 2015), given that education is a distinctively less central component of illiberal conceptions of progress (Schofer, Meyer, and Lerch 2020). Recent trends towards populism are often hostile to education. For example, the illiberal Trump administration in the United States is overtly hostile to top-down education reform: The administration has cut funding to education claiming, ‘It is clear that top-down, Washington directed education reform has not worked’ (US Department of Education 2018, 1). Viktor Orban’s illiberal Hungary, furthermore, has reduced compulsory schooling, cut funding to state-funded universities, and seen a 20-percentage point decline in female tertiary enrolments from 2008 to 2015 (Schofer, Meyer, and Lerch 2020). Resurgent nationalisms, which reject liberal notions of global interdependence and multilateralism, are also likely undercut the impetus to conform to global movements like Education for All or the Millennium Development Goals. In general, reforms advocated by international organisations could become less welcome under these changing international conditions.

Stated more formally,

Proposition 1: Since the turn of the twenty-first century, as reactions against liberal and neoliberal ideology grow, international organization emphases on education reform will slow.

Institutional mechanisms. Neoinstitutional theory posits that the cultural construction of global models is a necessary condition for a wave of education reform to spread around the world. But the existence of models is not sufficient; they also need to diffuse. Organisational sociology points to several mechanisms that shape diffusion: models, once constructed, can diffuse through functional

and institutional channels, often simultaneously (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Functional mechanisms typically reflect an entity's actual capability, need, or raw self-interests, while institutional channels include mimetic (i.e., copying what is perceived to be successful or legitimate), normative (i.e., what is recommended by experts and professionals), and coercive (i.e., what is required by the institutional environment, including hard and soft laws as well as conscious and unconscious taken-for-granted beliefs) mechanisms. Particularly in conditions where it is difficult to calculate interests or evaluate outcomes, such as education, social and cultural processes like mimicry, professional guidelines, and the search for legitimacy are often driving forces behind diffusion (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007). In the liberal and neo-liberal eras of the 1980s and 1990s, these mimetic and professional channels are well-documented forces in the construction of the global education regime (Chabbot 2003; Suárez 2007) and in the global diffusion of public policies more generally (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007).

In existing research, international organisations (and the professionals who work therein) have emerged as the primary carriers of world cultural models (Meyer et al. 1997; Boli and Thomas 1999). International organisations play vital roles in creating legitimate expert knowledge and disseminating models of appropriate action to national governments (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Ruggie 1998), especially in what many commentators have characterised as the 'organizational society' of the postwar period (Perrow 1991; Bromley and Meyer 2015). These multilateral organisations serve as a platform for collective activities, and they serve to centralise norms, ideas, and values established by the international community (Mundy 2007). This institutional view can be contrasted with critical realist arguments that international organisations are simply vehicles for powerful nation-states to pursue material self-interest, and not actors in their own right (Grieco 1988; Mearsheimer 1994; Strange 2020). This prediction is also in contrast to managerialist arguments that international organisation discourse emphasising education reform will straightforwardly reflect country need or capability for reform. Overall, institutional research suggests that international organisations will be highly influential in shaping reform discourse beyond any country characteristics. In sum,

Proposition 2: Levels of education reform rhetoric will vary significantly by organization, net of country features.

Data & methods

Conceptualising education reform discourse

As many have described, the concept of 'reform' suggests something non-routine. Importantly, however, although reform entails organisational changes, it is not equivalent or reducible to organisational change itself (Brunsson 2009). In education, a great deal of change happens through demographic shifts unrelated to reform efforts; economic prosperity or depression in the wider system; the coming and going of teachers, principals, superintendents and other staff; the gradual introduction of new technologies and infrastructure; or the rise and fall of various educational programmes, initiatives, fads, and fashions may alter education without claiming to re-form the system (Slavin 1989; Labaree 1997). Although reform is not synonymous with change itself, discourse about change is central to reform. The word 'reform' connotes a clear plan for what is hoped to be achieved is articulated publicly and explicitly (Brunsson 2009). Top-down changes that come without explanation (e.g., resource allocation decisions) are unlikely to be called reforms. And more general goals or pressures to change (e.g., to improve test scores or reduce segregation) are not concrete reforms until they are linked to a formalised blueprint for change that can be applied.

Many scholars have noted that reform efforts routinely fail to generate lasting change in practice, even in the presence of a great deal of rhetoric (Cuban 1990; Sarason 1990; Payne 2008) These studies reinforce the point that discourse is central to the concept of reform, and rhetoric is only sometimes followed by varied implementation and effects. Importantly, discourse itself exerts a powerful force

on society independent of any direct changes to practice. In a series of studies related to ours, Berkovich and Benoliel (2018, 2019) speak to the power of reform discourse by providing nuanced insight into how the OECD uses education reform reporting as a form normative control over narratives around teacher quality (Berkovich and Benoliel 2018, 2019).

Overall, we conceptualise reform as the discursive construction of an abstract model (or plan) intended to create systemic change that can, in theory, be implemented in concrete settings (Brunsson and Olsen 2018; Brunsson 2009). That is, the concept of reform encompasses ‘conscious considerations’ of educational change, as well as rhetorical and on-the-ground practices (Cookson 1992; Fiala et al. 1995). Others have used the terms ‘systemic’ and ‘planned’ change to describe the purposeful, explicit, and formalised nature of reform (Cuban 1990).

Reform discourse in international organisations is not the only aspect of reform that could be studied: other important alternatives include implementation or consequences. But discussion of reform is an important aspect of the phenomenon because discourse is a mechanism for creating and maintaining organisational realities (Chia 2000; Grant et al. 2004). Today it is well understood that wide swathes of reality are socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Meyer and Rowan 1977). At the extreme, the institutionalisation of socially constructed theories can come to shape how it actually operates. For instance, early financial theories created models of how the stock market should act, which subsequently influenced actual stock market behaviour (Mackenzie 2006). In education, discursive constructions can serve as one source of guidance about legitimate behaviour in uncertain situations. Thus, despite uncertainty about the true link between reform discourse and implementation or consequences, the widespread diffusion of discussion of education reform can in itself become a rationale for action and reflects beliefs about legitimate activity. Given this conceptualisation of discourse as a key process in the social construction of reality, we seek to understand factors that contribute to changing levels of education reform discourse via a content analysis of international organisation reports.

Sample

To test our arguments, we draw on a unique primary dataset on global education policy reform discourse. To date, there is no cross-national, longitudinal database of education policy reforms around the world available for researchers. The best existing information is a list compiled by the OECD based on its publication, *Education Policy Outlook* (OECD 2019), focused on the largely wealthy set of OECD countries. Our data collection process draws on multiple sources to yield the most expansive database to-date, including transitional and developing countries around the world.

To construct the database, we searched for sources that would allow us to systematically gather discussions about policy reforms from many countries and over multiple decades. Given our focus on the intersection of globalisation and education reform, we select reforms reported to, or by, international organisations. International reports have the added benefit of containing the most comparable and comprehensive data we could find for a large sample of countries over decades.

We selected three international organisations known for extensive involvement in education reform over the whole post-War period through today – the World Bank, UNESCO, and the OECD. Our sample excludes reports from an important new international organisation in education founded in 2002, the Global Partnership for Education, because of our interest in change over a longer period of time. And we exclude Unicef, which is focused on disaster relief and thus has a more limited role in general education reforms. The data collection effort starts with reports in the 1990s, because this captures change over the period of interest (a period of discontent with liberal and neoliberal world culture growing over the twenty-first century). And we gathered reports that were available online between March and April 2019; the earliest available is from 1998.

We included only country reports in our sample, excluding other types of thematic education reports published by these three organisations, because we expected country reports to have more comprehensive and systematic reporting of reforms. For example, the 2018 World Development Report on Learning was the first published by the World Bank that focused on education, however,

references to reforms undertaken by countries are often briefly mentioned anecdotally or as illustrative example. The sample includes four types of reports produced by major international organisations in education: the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s *Education Policy Outlook* (EPO), the OECD's *Reviews of National Policies for Education* (RNPE), the World Bank's *Systems Approach for Better Education Results* reports (SABER), and the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO)'s *World Data on Education* reports (WDE). The final analytic sample includes 473 reports published over the period 1998–2018 – a total of 24,225 pages of text yielding 7,018 education reforms. These reports come from 146 countries or territories representing every region of the world.

Table 1 provides an overview of the analytic sample.⁵ Notably, the reports vary a great deal in the number of reforms they mention on average and in their length. In particular, the World Bank's SABER reports discuss on average only 6.61 reforms per report, while other reports range from 17.65 to 19.91 reforms discussed on average. Also notable, the OECD's RNPE reports are 231.12 pages on average, while other reports range from 25.73 to 33.70 pages. Thus, when accounting for length, RNPE reports discuss far fewer reports on average than the others. These reports are similar in that they were selected as being a main outlet where the organisation publicises country reform activities, but they differ in terms of their nature, focus, and purpose.

UNESCO's International Bureau of Education publishes the WDE database and the series of related country education reports included in our sample. The first WDE series was published in 1996 and there have been seven editions, the most recent in 2010/2011. The reports provide an overview of the education system's structure, list of foundational education legislation, and curriculum and curriculum development issues. The reports provide descriptions and do not include an explicit section of policy recommendations.

The OECD EPO series provide analysis of national education policies primarily among OECD member countries. The reports provide information and analysis on a specific education policy area to guide policy making. These reports cover education policy with a focus on six 'policy levers': equity and quality, preparing students for the future, school improvement, evaluation and assessment, governance, and funding. These reports are also used for comparative benchmarking across OECD countries on these topics.

Table 1. Features of Reports in the Analytic Sample (n = 473).

Report (Code), Organisation	N. reports	Avg. n reforms/ report (avg n. pages)	Description
World Data on Education (WDE), UNESCO	217	19.91 (29.55)	Published by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education with a focus on curriculum reforms. There is a total of seven editions of the WDE database and report series (most recent: 2010/2011). Targets low, middle, and high-income countries
Education Policy Outlook (EPO), OECD	37	17.65 (25.73)	Evaluative country reports of national education policies in OECD member countries. Prepared by OECD in consultation with governments. Reports provide comparative benchmarking across OECD countries in six areas: equity and quality, preparing students for the future, school improvement, evaluation and assessment, governance, and funding.
Reviews of National Policies for Education (RNPE), OECD	48	19.02 (231.12)	Produced by the OECD for its member countries. Reports summarises OECD countries' education systems. They cover an entire education system or may cover one area (e.g., tertiary education).
Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), World Bank	171	6.61 (33.70)	Published by the World Bank for low, middle, and high-income countries. The report assesses education policies on one of 13 SABER foci. Reports provide standardised metrics to facilitate comparison and benchmarking across countries.

The OECD produces RNPE reports for its member countries. Member countries request the assistance of the OECD in conducting the review, ranging from early childhood development to workforce development. The topics of RNPE's vary based on the needs and request of the government. Some reports in the series provide a comprehensive analysis of a country's entire education system, while others focus on a specific policy area or level of education. The purpose of the reports is to present comparative data on a country's education policies and institutions in a specific topic area that can be easily benchmarked against the results from other countries.

SABER reports are intended to produce comparative data on education policies, with the aim of helping countries systematically strengthen their education systems. They are intended for low, middle, and high-income countries and focus on a specific area. The 13 focus areas covered in SABER reports are: early childhood development; education management information systems; education resilience; engaging the private sector; equity and inclusion; information and communication technologies; school autonomy and accountability; school finance; school health and school feeding; student assessment; teachers; tertiary education; and workforce development.

Coding reform

After gathering this sample of reports, we read each report and recorded details of policy reforms. Before embarking on data collection, however, a central challenge was to develop a reliably codable definition of 'education reform'. After multiple rounds of reliability testing and discussion, we came to a three-part operationalisation – 'systemic' (i.e., an administrative level above an individual school, part of a system), 'planned' (i.e., intentional), and 'change' (i.e., non-routine). In accordance with our conceptualisation of reform above, this understanding of reform as systemic or planned distinguishes it from alternative sources of change such as unplanned evolution or non-systemic, non-formal education fads, projects, or initiatives (e.g., see Labaree 1997; Brunsson 2009). The result from a two-way, random effects intra-class correlation (ICC) to test for inter-rater reliability was 0.85, which falls within the range of the level of significance rated as excellent (Cicchetti 1994).

Research assistants received in-person training and written instructions to use these three signposts in the coding process. They recorded all laws, acts, policies, plans, or other reforms in our sample of reports, in addition to the name and year of the reform and a short description. These data were inputted into a Qualtrics survey that included response fields for each report (type, length, report year) and details for each reform identified in the report (reform year, reform name, brief description).

The challenge: Eliminating system-level policies that hinder equity, such as grade repetition, and preventing early dropout.

Recent policies and practices

The Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality ([Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa](#), LOMCE, 2013), aims to increase flexibility in lower secondary education and improve the transition into upper secondary vocational programmes (see Spotlight 1).

Several national plans aim to improve equity in education and social inclusion: the National Strategic Plan for Childhood and Adolescence 2013-2016 ([Plan Estratégico Nacional de Infancia y Adolescencia](#)) and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2013-2016 ([Plan Nacional de Acción para la Inclusión Social](#)), and the Programmes for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support ([Programas de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo](#), 2005, modified in 2010), which provide resources to education institutions to address inequalities and social exclusion.

Efforts to reduce early school leaving have been ongoing. The Programme to reduce early dropout in education and training ([Programa para la reducción del abandono temprano de la educación y la formación](#), 2008) which provides funding for preventive measures, has [shown a small impact](#) on reducing dropout. More recently, the National Reform Plan 2013, which lays out objectives to meet the European Union 2020 strategy, proposes to reduce dropout rates to 15% by 2020.

Figure 2. Sample data – Education Policy Outlook report for Spain in 2014

Figure 2 illustrates an OECD report from Spain in 2014 that lists six national policy reforms. Note that, although we are reporting reform discourse that appears in a given year, actual reforms are often attributed to various years or a range of years. For example, the Spanish report in Figure 2 is from 2014, but it lists past and future reforms (in the order listed: 2013, 2013–2016, 2005, 2010, 2008, 2013). For this study, the year would be listed as ‘2014’ (the report year) and the number of reforms would be coded as ‘6’.

Measures & analysis method

Our dependent variable is the number of reforms mentioned in a report. Our first proposition is time, which we examine based on the year a report was published. We look at a linear measure of publication year, as well as the pre- and post-2008 periods. The time periods allow us to consider whether any possible decline in reform discourse is primarily linked to the global financial crisis of 2008 (Ginsburg et al. 1991), or if it instead represents a more general trend since the 1990s. Our second proposition relates to the type of report produced by different organisations, which we measure using a dichotomous variable for each of the four report types listed above. In addition, we control for the overall amount of reporting, including a measure of report length (number of pages, logged) and the total number of reports in the sample each year.

Reports are linked to specific countries, so we use country fixed-effects to control for all time invariant properties of a country (meaning the coefficients estimate associations within a country), and also include a time-varying control for GDP/capita. Given that our dependent variable is a count, we use Poisson models to consider the associations between our predictor variables and the outcome (Long 1997).

Findings

Overall, we find support for both functional and institutional arguments. Consistent with our first proposition, Figure 3 shows that the number of education reforms mentioned per report has declined in recent years. There is a statistically significant drop immediately in the wake of 2008, suggesting

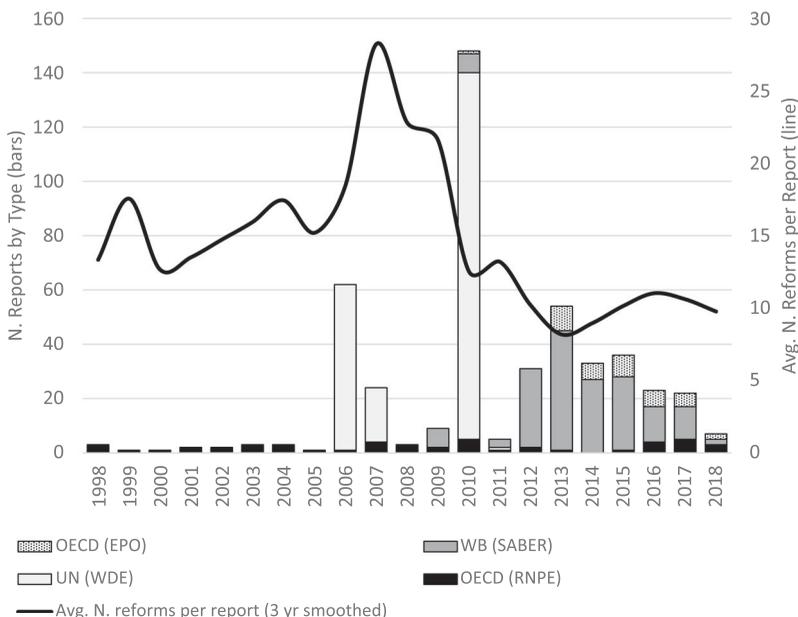


Figure 3. Number of reports by type over time and average number of reforms per report (n = 473)

that a move away from reform may be in part linked to the global financial crisis. However, emphases on reform do not rebound as the global economy recovers. Thus, we posit the ongoing decline is part of a broader cultural process of diminishing confidence in liberal institutions. Concrete events (like the financial crisis) have influence beyond their direct effects (such as financial constraints) by activating or accelerating cultural change. Other influences, such as the September 11th, 2001 terror attacks and increasing income inequality, could reflect and contribute to a building backlash against globalised (neo)-liberal society (e.g., Colgan and Keohane 2017; Allison 2018).

As also shown by the bars in Figure 3, the amount of reporting varies widely from year to year, with notable peaks in 2006 and 2010 when UNESCO produced new editions of the WDE reports. The overall number of reforms discussed in any given year correlates highly with the total number of reports produced – so as a matter of raw counting, the number of reforms is greatest in 2006 and 2010 (corresponding the years the most reports are produced). However, after controlling for the number of reports produced each year, reform discourse within international organisation reports has declined since a peak of about 28 reforms mentioned per report in 2007 to about 11 reforms per report in 2018 (shown by the line in Figure 3).

To further consider the arguments, in Table 2 we turn to basic regression models to examine whether there are associations between reform emphases and time (indicated by the year a report was produced) and organisational influences (indicated by the type of report), net of country controls. Model 1 presents controls for the amount of reporting (report length and number of reports per year) as well as a control for GDP per capita and country fixed effects, which we include across all models. As noted above, more reporting is linked to more discussion of reform. In addition, as shown in model 2, the relationship between GDP per capita and discussion of reform takes a ‘U’ shape, indicated by the negative and significant coefficient on GDP per capita (log) and the positive and significant squared term. Countries discuss significantly more reform when their GDP per capita shifts away from a middle level towards higher or lower ends of the spectrum. This finding provides evidence of functional forces at work: When GDP per capita is lower, a country may be either more in need of education reform, or more dependent on external resources and thus susceptible to

Table 2. Poisson regression predicting number of education reforms discussed by year and report type (n = 473).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
N. pages (log)	.110*** (.020)	.162*** (.021)	.151*** (.021)	.172*** (.021)	.535*** (.042)	.521*** (.042)
N. reports per year	.003*** (.000)	.003*** (.000)	.002*** (.000)	.005*** (.000)	-.001** (.000)	.000 (.001)
GDP/capita (log)	-.391*** (.054)	-2.708*** (.192)	-2.215*** (.194)	-1.616*** (.201)	-.730*** (.211)	-.691** (.213)
Squared GDP/capita (log)		.310*** (.025)	.331*** (.024)	.258*** (.025)	.157*** (.026)	.142*** (.026)
Report Publication Year			-.063*** (.006)		-.026*** (.007)	
Post-2008 Publication Year				-.700*** (.044)		-.231*** (.069)
OECD (EPO)					Reference Category	Reference Category
OECD (RNPE)					-1.064*** (.117)	-1.007*** (.113)
World Bank (SABER)					-.913*** (.071)	-.867*** (.069)
UNESCO (WDE)					.194** (.075)	.175* (.081)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
chi2	201.99	353.83	472.97	595.19	819.41	823.05
df	3	4	5	5	8	8
BIC	3421.18	3260.77	3133.47	3014.00	2727.98	2729.71

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; + $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; fixed effects by 146 country groups; GDP/capita (log) is zero centred to adjust for the addition of the squared term.

coercion to adopt reforms that serve powerful interests. When a country's GDP per capita is higher, it may have greater capacity to reform its education system.

Models 3 and 4 show that, holding constant the amount of reporting and country factors, there is a significant decline in discussion of reform over time. Both a linear measure of year (Model 3) and an indicator for the post-2008 period (Model 4) have significantly negative associations with the amount of reform discourse. Comparing Models 3 and 4, fit statistics suggest that there is little difference in the overall fit (i.e., similar BIC and chi-square statistics). Actual financial hardship may have provided an exogenous shock that contributed to declining emphases on education reform, but the long-term decline points to cultural pressures beyond resource imperatives.

Our second proposition argued that differences between international organisations would be a key source of changes in the level of educational reform discourse, net of country characteristics. Our findings strongly support this argument, finding significant differences between the report types, even when holding constant all time invariant properties of countries and controlling for GDP/capita. Speculatively, varied levels of education reform discourse may reflect the breadth of membership and scope of the educational mandates of these organisations. UNESCO's role can be characterised by 'advocacy, research, and documentation' (Mundy 1999, 33) which is consistent with the high-level effort to document reform measures observed here. The OECD's involvement in education has historically been more limited to members (Davis 2016), but their expansion into advocacy for policy reforms through international assessment in the early 2000s marks a shifting role during the period of our study. The World Bank has a distinct emphasis, in its capacity as a financial institution, on funding (loans and grants) and technical assistance, and on supporting human capital visions of education. The Bank's focused goal could be linked to a narrower reform agenda than, for example, UNESCO, thus explaining why SABER documents mention fewer reforms than WDE documents. Unfortunately, an analysis of the reform mandates of these organisations or the types of reforms they report about is beyond the scope of our aims here. But we hope these preliminary findings will generate future research focused on the varied influences of international organisations in promoting varied levels and types of education reform.

As a further finding, the size of the coefficients on our measures of time are substantially reduced when controlling for report type. This drop suggests that weakening emphases on reform discourse over time occurs largely via the mechanism of organisation-level changes in the types of reports produced. For example, on average, SABER reports discuss fewer reforms than WDE reports. The WDE reports were produced by UNESCO up to 2011, but there has not been a new edition in nearly a decade. In contrast, SABER reports produced by the World Bank started only in 2010, and by 2011 were the most numerous report in our database produced each year. There is a resulting in a decline over time as SABER reports become more commonplace. After controlling for report type, the size of the coefficient on time becomes smaller because much of the change is driven by changes across the types of reports produced rather than within a report type. However, note there is still a significant decline over time even when holding report type constant.

Discussion & conclusion

Our findings show the value of an organisational theory view of global education reform, especially the lens of sociological institutionalism. First, our organisational lens suggests a theoretical reason to predict falling emphasis on education reform as a theme in international organisation reports. We argue that a growing disenchantment with the liberal and neoliberal world cultural principles that generated earlier celebrations of education reform should lead to decreased emphases on reform – and we find support for this argument in our empirical analyses through falling emphases on reform over time. Second, our results highlight the central role of international organisations. It is noteworthy that there are vast differences between organisations in their education reform discourse, even controlling for county factors. We did not find strong existing rationales in the literature to

generate hypotheses in advance on why these differences might occur, but the strength of the findings calls for further research to understand the different role of multilateral agencies in their support for education reform (e.g., McNeely 1995; Mundy and Menashy 2014). In particular, these findings provide a compelling case for additional qualitative research that uses an organisational lens to better understand the influences that drive these observed statistical differences between organisations. For example, qualitative studies of specific international organisations that draw on neo-institutional organisational theories have shown how intra-organisational dynamics are shaped by attention to norms and models in the organisational environment (e.g., Weaver 2008; Strang 2010); future research could extend this line of work to focus more concretely on comparing approaches to education reform across organisations.

There are several limitations to our study that point to avenues for future research. In this paper we focus on the number of reforms discussed, and not on the content of reforms. We would expect both extent and content to change as liberal world culture becomes less hegemonic, and hope to pursue studies of changing content in future work. Using the existing database, in future research it would be possible to systematically characterise the substantive content and timing of each of the 7,012 reforms listed in the reports. For example, a series of reforms are linked to assessments, while others are related to the curriculum. This expanded study could build on our focus on organisations to include features of reforms and of countries to allow for a more detailed study of the multi-level dynamics that support or inhibit education reform. It would also be valuable to expand the sample to include additional organisations, to visit archives for earlier data, and to conduct case studies comparing discourse in the international documents to national rhetoric and activity.

In addition, we focus on national-level reports, which likely underestimates the scope of change in highly decentralised systems like the U.S. We also have no measure of the size of each reform, which can vary from changes in school budget allocations in selected provinces to revision of the national language curriculum. This inability to determine the size and scope of reform has an uncertain effect on our results; we could be over-reporting levels of reform if most are very minor or under-reporting if many of the reforms are very large. Although we have no conceptual reason or prior research to suggest contemporary reforms are intended to be larger than earlier reforms (which included the establishment of education systems in many post-colonial and post-Soviet countries), if it is the case that today's reforms are larger than it could be that the discourse reflects similar or even expanded levels of intended change. Lastly, we capture only rhetorical, reported claims to reform, rather than actual implementation or the impact of reform measures. In practice, there may be ceiling effects or reform fatigue, although a robustness check excluding cases with the highest levels of reform produced results with the same sign and direction presented here. Moreover, as noted at the outset, we value discursive studies as revealing dominant and legitimate narratives in society; they hold a unique intellectual position that complements studies of implementation or effectiveness.

Stemming from neo-institutional theories of organisation, this study offers a bird's eye view of education reform, analysing global, macro-level trends over a span of two decades. The post-war period was characterised by a massive expansion of education reform activities globally. During this time, education reform became a normal, even valued, feature of schooling – at the extreme, some now celebrate the formerly troublesome act of 'disruption'. Our findings suggest an earlier binge of reform mania is slowing, consistent with arguments that there are increasingly ambivalent global sentiments towards liberal, and especially neoliberal, world culture since the late 1990s. From a critical perspective, reduced global education reform discourse may be beneficial, as it could portend a retreat by powerful international organisations and wealthy countries from exerting self-interested influence over poor countries. Certainly, reform can be fraught with problems of implementation, material self-interest, or ideological hegemony. Reforms can consequentially impact the lives of students, parents and teachers on large-scale, and drain scarce resources, so they should be undertaken with caution, rather than adopted reflexively or under coercive pressures

to conform to dominant cultural norms. But from the institutional view put forth here, the decline of reform discourse may point to an unsettling future. It suggests a weakening of liberal and neoliberal world culture, which has contributed to educational expansion on grounds of individual rights and development. The spectre of a world that is increasingly characterised by illiberal or anti-liberal cultural principles, including less universalism, creates great uncertainty for the future of global education.

Notes

1. For a range of cases, see the studies in Cookson (1992); on liberal democracies, see Ball (1994) or Davies and Guppy (1997).
2. The Google Books Ngram Corpus is an online corpus comprised of over eight million books published across five centuries; it is the largest digital collection of books available for identifying general linguistic and cultural trends over time (see Google 2020; Lin et al. 2012).
3. It is beyond the scope of our purposes here to give a more complete explanation for the rise of liberal and neoliberal culture, and the causes of increasing attacks, and others have provided excellent accounts: for the rise of neoliberal world culture see Lechner and Boli (2008); for the reasons behind recent pushback see, e.g., Diamond, Plattner, and Rice (2015); Guillén (2018); Norris and Inglehart (2019).
4. As others have noted, the ‘universalistic’ nature of these ideologies describes the philosophical content and not their actual distribution worldwide. For example, education is assumed to be a universal human right in global institutional models (in policy, if not in practice), rather than a right that should only be extended to some countries or to some segments of the population (Furuta 2020). These models are rooted in Western conceptions of justice and progress, and advanced around the world through international governmental and non-governmental organisations (e.g., Meyer et al. 1997).
5. In addition to the four report types included in this study, we initially had collected Project Appraisal Documents (PADs) produced by the World Bank. But in the final study, we opted to exclude these because our pilot study revealed these are often more specific initiatives rather than the systemic policy reforms of interest here (Author). We also opted to exclude OECD Education at a Glance Country Notes following the results of our pilot study because these short notes mainly report tables of education statistics related to the structure, finances, and performance of education systems and include few if any specific references to policy reforms.

Acknowledgement

We wish to thank Minju Choi and Laura Talpey for outstanding research assistance. We appreciate feedback on early versions of this paper from audiences at Comparative and International Education Society, members of the Comparative Sociology Workshop at Stanford Graduate School of Education, the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, and members of the Institute for Intercultural and International Studies at the University of Bremen. We are particularly grateful to John Meyer for comments on an early draft. Support for this project comes from Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, Stanford Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, Stanford Global Development and Poverty Initiative, and Stanford Graduate School of Education.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Works Cited

- Adamson, Frank, Bjorn Astrand, and Linda Darling-Hammond. 2016. *Global Education Reform: How Privatization and Public Investment Influence Education Outcomes*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Allison, Graham. 2018. “The Myth of the Liberal Order: From Historical Accident to Conventional Wisdom.” *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/myth-liberal-order>.
- Arnov, Robert F. 2005. “To What Ends: Educational Reform Around the World.” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 12 (1): 79–95.
- Astiz, M Fernanda, Alexander W Wiseman, and David P. Baker. 2002. “Slouching Towards Decentralization: Consequences of Globalization for Curricular Control in National Education Systems.” *Comparative Education Review* 46 (1): 66–88.

- Bajaj, Monisha. 2011. "Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches." *Human Rights Quarterly* 33: 481–508.
- Ball, Stephen J. 1994. *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-Structural Approach*. Bristol, PA: Open University Press.
- Ball, Stephen J. 2007. *Education Plc: Understanding Private Sector Participation in Public Sector Education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London, UK: Penguin Social Sciences.
- Berkovich, Izhak. 2011. "No We Won't! Teachers' Resistance to Educational Reform." *Journal of Educational Administration* 5 (49): 563–578.
- Berkovich, Izhak. 2019. "Process Implementation Perspective on Neoliberal Regulation: A Comparative Analysis of National Curricula and Standards-Based Reforms in the USA and Australia." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 17 (5): 593–609.
- Berkovich, Izhak, and Pascale Benoliel. 2018. "Marketing Teacher Quality: Critical Discourse Analysis of OECD Documents on Effective Teaching and TALIS." *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–16. doi:10.1080/17508487.2018.1521338.
- Berkovich, Izhak, and Pascale Benoliel. 2019. "Understanding OECD Representations of Teachers and Teaching: A Visual Discourse Analysis of Covers in OECD Documents." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 17 (2): 132–146. doi:10.1080/14767724.2018.1525281.
- Bieber, Tonia, and Kerstin Martens. 2011. "The OECD PISA Study as a Soft Power in Education? Lessons from Switzerland and the US." *European Journal of Education* 46 (1): 101–116. doi:10.1111/j.1465-3435.2010.01462.x.
- Boli, John, Francisco Ramirez, and John W. Meyer. 1985. "Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education." *Comparative Education Review* 29 (2): 145–170.
- Boli, John, and George M Thomas. 1999. *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations Since 1875*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bromley, Patricia, and John Meyer. 2015. *Hyper-Organization: Global Organizational Expansion*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Bromley, Patricia, and Walter W Powell. 2012. "From Smoke and Mirrors to Walking the Talk: Decoupling in the Contemporary World." *Academy of Management Annals* 6 (1): 483–530.
- Bromley, Patricia, Evan Schofer, and Wesley Longhofer. 2020. "Contentions Over World Culture: The Rise of Legal Restrictions on Foreign Funding to NGOs, 1994–2015." *Social Forces* 99 (1): 281–304.
- Brunsson, Nils. 2009. *Reform as Routine: Organizational Change and Stability in the Modern World*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brunsson, Nils, and Johan P Olsen. 2018. "The Reforming Organization." London: Routledge.
- Buckner, Elizabeth, Dominique Spencer, and Jihae Cha. 2018. "Between Policy and Practice: The Education of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31 (4): 444–465.
- Chabbot, Colette. 2003. *Constructing Educational Development: International Development Organizations and the World Conference on Education for All*. New York & London: Falmer Press.
- Chia, Robert. 2000. "Discourse Analysis Organizational Analysis." *Organization* 7 (3): 513–518.
- Cicchetti, Domenic V. 1994. "Guidelines, Criteria, and Rules of Thumb for Evaluating Normed and Standardized Assessment Instruments in Psychology." *Psychological Assessment* 6 (4): 284–290.
- Colclough, Christopher. 1996. "Education and the Market: Which Parts of the Neoliberal Solution Are Correct?" *World Development* 24 (4): 589–610. doi:10.1016/0305-750X(95)00157-8.
- Colgan, Jeff D, and Robert O Keohane. 2017. "The Liberal Order Is Rigged: Fix It Now or Watch It Wither Essays." *Foreign Affairs* (3): 36–44. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/fora96&i=482>.
- Cookson Jr, Peter W. 1992. *International Handbook of Educational Reform*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Cuban, Larry. 1990. "Reforming Again, Again, and Again." *Educational Researcher* 19 (1): 3–13.
- Davies, S., and N. Guppy. 1997. "Globalization and Educational Reforms in Anglo-American Democracies." *Comparative Education Review* 41 (4): 435–459.
- Davis, Christina L. 2016. "More than Just a Rich Country Club: Membership Conditionality and Institutional Reform in the OECD."
- Debeauvais, Michel, and Malcolm Livesey. 1986. "Doctoral Theses in France: A Case of 'Reformitis'." *European Journal of Education* 21: 375–384.
- Diamond, Larry, Marc Plattner, and Condoleezza Rice. 2015. *Democracy in Decline?*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- DiMaggio, Paul J, and Walter W Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review* 48: 147–160.
- Dobbin, Frank, Beth Simmons, and Geoffrey Garrett. 2007. "The Global Diffusion of Public Policies: Social Construction, Coercion, Competition, or Learning?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 449–472.
- Drori, Gili, John Meyer, and Hokyu Hwang. 2006. *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change*. London: Oxford University Press.

- Drori, Gili, John Meyer, and Evan Schofer. 2003. *Science in the Modern World Polity: Institutionalization and Globalization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Farrell, Joseph. 2007. "Equality of Education: A Half-Century of Comparative Evidence Seen From a New Millenium." In *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local*, edited by Robert F. Arnove, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Stephen Franz, 146–175. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Little Field.
- Fiala, Robert, Peter W. Cookson, Alan R. Sadovnik, and Susan F. Semel. 1995. "Macrosociologies–International Handbook of Educational Reform Edited by Peter W. Cookson Jr, Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel." *Contemporary Sociology* 24 (1): 62.
- Finger, Leslie K. 2018. "Vested Interests and the Diffusion of Education Reform Across the States." *Policy Studies Journal* 46 (2): 378–401.
- Finnemore, Martha. 1993. "International Organizations as Teachers of Norms: The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and Science Policy." *International Organization* 47 (4): 565–597. doi:10.1017/S0020818300028101.
- Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52 (4): 887–917.
- Foroohar, Rana. 2016. "American Capitalism's Great Crisis. Time, May 12." February. <https://time.com/4327419/american-capitalisms-great-crisis/>.
- Furuta, Jared. 2020. "Liberal Individualism and the Globalization of Education as a Human Right: The Worldwide Decline of Early Tracking, 1960–2010." *Sociology of Education* 93 (1): 1–19.
- Galal, A. 2008. *The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa*. MENA Development Report. The World Bank. <https://books.google.com/books?id=yHmdAAAAMAAJ>.
- Ginsburg, Mark, Susan Cooper, Rajeshwari Raghu, and Hugo Zegarra. 1991. "Educational Reform: Social Struggle, the State and the World Economic System." In *Understanding Educational Reform in Global Context: Economy, Ideology, and the State*, edited by Mark Ginsberg, 3–47. New York: Routledge.
- Google. 2020. "Google Books Ngram Viewer." 2020. <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>.
- Grant, David, Cynthia Hardy, Cliff Oswick, and Linda L. Putnam. 2004. "Organizational Discourse: Exploring the Field." In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse*, edited by David Grant, Cynthia Hardy, Cliff Oswick, and Linda L. Putnam, 1–37. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Grieco, Joseph M. 1988. "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism." *International Organization* 42 (3): 485–507. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>.
- Grindle, Merilee S. 2004. *Despite the Odds: The Contentious Politics of Education Reform*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Guillén, Mauro F. 2018. *Rude Awakening: Threats to the Global Liberal Order*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hadler, Markus, and Jonathan Symons. 2018. "World Society Divided: Divergent Trends in State Responses to Sexual Minorities and Their Reflection in Public Attitudes." *Social Forces* 96 (4): 1721–1756.
- Heyneman, Stephen. 2003. "The History and Problems in the Making of Education Policy at the World Bank, 1960–2000." *International Journal of Educational Development* 23: 315–337. doi:10.1016/S0738-0593(02)00053-6.
- Hwang, Hokyū. 2006. "Globalization and the Shifting Locus of Planning." In *World Society and Organizational Change*, edited by Gili Drori, John Meyer, and Hokyū Hwang, 69–90. London: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, Michelle, and David B. Grusky. 2018. "A Post-Liberal Theory of Stratification." *The British Journal of Sociology* 69 (4): 1096–1133.
- Katz, Michael B. 2001. *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Kijima, Rie, and Phillip Y. Lipsky. 2020. "International Assessments and Education Policy: Evidence from an Elite Survey." In *The Power of Global Performance Indicators*, edited by Judith Kelley and Beth Simmons, 174–202. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Klees, Steven J., Joel Samoff, and Nelly P. Stromquist. 2012. *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Labaree, David F. 1997. "Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle Over Educational Goals." *American Educational Research Journal* 34 (1): 39–81.
- Lechner, Frank, and John Boli. 2008. *World Culture: Origins and Consequences*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lerch, Julia, Patricia Bromley, and John Meyer. 2020. "The Expansive Educational Consequences of Global Neoliberalism."
- Lin, Y., J. B. Michel, E. L. Aiden, J. Orwant, W. Brockman, and S. Petrov. 2012. "Syntactic Annotations for the Google Books Ngram Corpus." Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, Jeju, Republic of Korea, 169–174.
- Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables. Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mackenzie, Donald. 2006. "Is Economics Performative? Option Theory and the Construction of Derivatives Markets." *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 28 (1): 29–55. doi:10.1080/10427710500509722.

- March, James G. 1978. "Bounded Rationality, Ambiguity, and the Engineering of Choice." *The Bell Journal of Economics* 9: 587–608.
- McNeely, Connie. 1995. *Constructing the Nation-State: International Organization and Prescriptive Action*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 1994. "The False Promise of International Institutions." *International Security* 19 (3): 5–49. doi:10.2307/2539078.
- Meyer, John. 2010. "World Society, Institutional Theories, and the Actor." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (1): 1–20. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102506.
- Meyer, John W., John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez. 1997. "World Society and the Nation-State." *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1): 144–181. doi:10.1086/231174.
- Meyer, John, Francisco Ramirez, and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal. 1992. "World Expansion of Mass Education, 1870–1980." *Sociology of Education* 65: 128–149.
- Meyer, John, and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (2): 340–363.
- Mundy, Karen. 1999. "Educational Multilateralism and World (Dis) Order." *Comparative Education Review* 42 (4): 448–478.
- Mundy, Karen. 2002. "Retrospect and Prospect: Education in a Reforming World Bank." *International Journal of Educational Development* 22 (5): 483–508.
- Mundy, Karen. 2007. "Global Governance, Educational Change." *Comparative Education* 43 (3): 339–357.
- Mundy, Karen, Andy Green, Bob Lingard, and Antoni Verger. 2016. *Handbook of Global Education Policy*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mundy, Karen, and Caroline Manion. 2014. "Globalization and Global Governance in Education." In *Globalization and Education*, 2nd ed.
- Mundy, Karen, and Francine Menashy. 2014. "The World Bank and Private Provision of Schooling: A Look Through the Lens of Sociological Theories of Organizational Hypocrisy." *Comparative Education Review* 58 (3): 401–427. doi:10.1086/676329.
- Mundy, Karen, and Antoni Verger. 2015. "The World Bank and the Global Governance of Education in a Changing World Order." *International Journal of Educational Development* 40: 9–18.
- Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- OECD. 2019. "Education Policy Outlooks: Working Together to Help Students Achieve Their Potential." Paris, France.
- Payne, Charles M. 2008. *So Much Reform, so Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Perrow, Charles. 1991. "A Society of Organizations." *Theory and Society* 20 (6): 725–762. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/657602>.
- Ramirez, Francisco, Yasemin Soysal, and Suzanne Shanahan. 1997. "The Changing Logic of Political Citizenship: Cross-National Acquisition of Women's Suffrage Rights, 1890 to 1990." *American Sociological Review* 62 (5): 735–745.
- Ruggie, John Gerard. 1998. "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge." *International Organization* 52 (4): 855–885.
- Sahlberg, Pasi. 2006. "Education Reform for Raising Economic Competitiveness." *Journal of Educational Change* 7 (4): 259–287.
- Sarason, Seymour B. 1990. *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform: Can We Change Course before It's Too Late? The Jossey-Bass Education Series and the Jossey-Bass Social and Behavioral Science Series*. ERIC.
- Schofer, Evan, and John W. Meyer. 2005. "The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century." *American Sociological Review* 70 (6): 898–920.
- Schofer, Evan, John Meyer, and Julia Lerch. 2020. "Illiberal Reactions to the University in the twenty-first Century."
- Sellar, Sam, and Bob Lingard. 2014. "The OECD and the Expansion of PISA: New Global Modes of Governance in Education." *British Educational Research Journal* 40 (6): 917–936. doi:10.1002/berj.3120.
- Silova, Iveta, and Gita Steiner-Khamsi. 2008. *How NGOs React: Globalization and Education Reform in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Mongolia*. Bloomington, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Slavin, Robert E. 1989. "PET and the Pendulum: Faddism in Education and How to Stop It." *The Phi Delta Kappan* 70 (10): 752–758. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20404026>.
- Steiner-Khamsi, Gita. 2010. "The Politics and Economics of Comparison." *Comparative Education Review* 54 (3): 323–342.
- Strang, David. 2010. *Learning by Example*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Strange, Susan. 2020. "Cave! hic Dragones: a Critique of Regime Analysis." *International Organization* 36 (2): 479–496.
- Suárez, David. 2007. "Education Professionals and the Construction of Human Rights Education." *Comparative Education Review* 51 (1): 48–70.

- Suárez, David, Francisco Ramirez, and Jeong-Woo Koo. 2009. "UNESCO and the Associated Schools Project: Symbolic Affirmation of World Community, International Understanding, and Human Rights." *Sociology of Education* 82 (3): 197–216.
- Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1919. *The Principles of Scientific Management*. New York & London: Harper & brothers.
- US Department of Education. 2018. "Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Summary and Background Information." U.S. Department of Education. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget18/summary/18summary.pdf>.
- Verger, Antoni, Clara Fontdevila, and Adrián Zancajo. 2016. *The Privatization of Education: A Political Economy of Global Education Reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Weaver, Catherine. 2008. *Hypocrisy Trap*. Princeton University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rv01>.
- Wiseman, Alexander W. 2010. "The Uses of Evidence for Educational Policymaking: Global Contexts and International Trends." *Review of Research in Education* 34 (1): 1–24.
- WorldBank. 2017. "SABER Early Childhood Development China Country Report 2016." Washington, DC.
- Zaff, Jonathan F. 2011. "A Cease and Desist Order for School Reform: It Is Time for Educational Transformation."
- Zapp, Mike. 2017. "The World Bank and Education: Governing (through) Knowledge." *International Journal of Educational Development* 53: 1–11.