Chapter 45
Education Policy in Cyprus: From Decision-Making to Implementation

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Introduction

Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) argue a point familiar to educational researchers within the field of policy sociology. Traditionally, policy analysis for social justice has taken place at the macro-level of the educational system while taking an interest in the objective measurement of justice-related phenomena. To this extent, the positivist, functionalist and pluralist assumptions have largely remained uncontested. Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin go on to explain that traditional policy analysis for social justice falls short in challenging the reliability of economics-based methods including cost-benefit or decision analysis. By relying on the assumption that policy for social justice can be studied in an analytical framework, the traditional view overlooks the sociocultural and value-laden character of education. However, education policies for social justice are the outcome of policy debates and conflicts over culture and values and 'result when certain cultural values win' (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin: 65).

In sociopolitical arenas, the political actors' normative judgments, such as their values and interests, influence the problem definition, meaning the ways in which the social justice issue is labeled, defined and ranked on the policy agenda in order to be satisfied. The definition of the social justice issue turns into policy goals reinforcing either developmental or redistributive policies, meaning 'whether a policy is a small add-on or it takes from some to give to others' (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005: 40). Nonetheless, Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin conclude that in order to disrupt inequity in education, not only political actors but also education leaders and educators across all the levels of the system should move from reproduction to reconstruction. They should challenge and disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions, norms,

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policies, structures and practices that perpetuate inequity by challenging the legitimacy of the system in order to systematically deinstitutionalise inequity.

Thereafter, we contend that beyond the structures of policy and policy planning for social justice in education, it is necessary to look into the cultural processes of policy implementation. For many analysts, education policy for social justice is delimited to the macrostructures of the state-derived rules and directives and hence disconnected from the educational cultures and implementation realities while neglecting the role of human agency (i.e. Hoskins, 2008). However, a broader lens of policy investigation implies not only the examination of social justice policy enactments but also the examination of the intentions, actions and inactions of the educators that are involved in the policy process, both decision-making and implementation.

Our argument is lent weight by Ozga's (2000) conception of policy as a process of negotiation, cooperation and conflict between different groups and individuals inside and outside the official mechanisms of policy-making. Accordingly, it opposes the instrumental notions of policy that conceptualise education as a social institution and define policy as the product of the institution's operation. Such conceptualisation decouples policy from the context within which it has emerged and fails to consider policy as both product and process. We thus disregard a conception of policy as a linear process which signifies that once developed, policy is implemented as intended. Consequently, policy for social justice does not include fixed and unambiguous mandates that derive from a single level of the educational system. On the basis of Ozga's definition, we indicate that education policy for social justice is rather ambiguous and unstable and encompasses all parts of the education system.

On this point, Bogotch (2008) argues that in order for social justice to become a reality, we should take into consideration the critical reflections of educators, across all the levels of the education system, upon professional issues of teaching, learning and leadership. We would agree that:

> if we are to succeed in clarifying social justice issues and problems of contemporary educational leadership, it will happen only when educators, at all levels, fully embrace the intellectual, political, social, and ethical challenges they face in everyday life. (Bogotch, 2008: 11)

Nowadays, many educators develop their school agendas and organise their school practices according to what the centralised state institutions say that matters in their schools. Bogotch remarks that the process should rather occur vice versa; supranational, national and local agencies should acknowledge educators' concerns on leadership and pedagogy in their decision-making.

The evidence we will present here seems to indicate that policy processes for social justice do not consist only of official policy formation by the state. Arguably, policy can exist, but without the implementation and the monitoring of its implementation, policy may also be non-existent. The implementation stage of the policy process entails the reinforcement of a policy formally adopted by a governmental

body into practice. Implementation may differ from the planned policy or its adoption, meaning the decision to employ this policy. That is, because 'institutional leaders do not mechanically implement policy from the state, nor do those studying and working in educational institutions mechanically implement the policies of their institutional leaders' (Bell & Stevenson, 2006: 9). Therefore in researching education policy for social justice, we should never take policy implementation for granted. Although the analysis of education policy for social justice stems from conceptualising the social justice issue within a particular sociopolitical context, it should also encompass the implementation of social justice policies in practice.

Conceptualising Social Justice Within the Political Theory

Notably, conceptions of social justice underpinning educational policy are not fixed, stable or uncontested across time, place and political context. Nonetheless, Lingard and Garrick (1997) in their trajectory study of social justice policy in Australian education identify three dominant traditions of social justice within the political theory: the liberal democratic, the liberal individualist, and the social democratic. The liberal-democratic tradition promulgates an activist role of the state which endorses a continuum of affirmative action and redistributive policies. Thereafter, 'each person should have the most extensive personal liberty for all that primary social goods', including education, and 'should be distributed equally, unless unequal distribution benefits the least advantaged' (Lingard & Garrick: 162). The liberal-individualist tradition (otherwise the market-individualist conception) instead of the distribution process focuses on the competition for the accumulation of social goods. The state plays a minimal role, just about to ensure fair competition. Lingard and Garrick criticise the first and second traditions as arbitrarily assuming that all individuals act in their own personal interest. On the other hand, the social-democratic tradition reinforces a more collectivist conception of society, pointing to a different relation between social justice and the market; the achievement of social justice necessitates state intervention within the market.

The different traditions of social justice policy attempt to conceptualise its goals and classifications. Nonetheless, in real-life situations these categories overlap and are always tentative. Although education policy provides for individual benefits, it should also emphasise the collective good by establishing relationships of equality and reciprocity within the context of a 'truly civil society' (Lingard & Garrick, 1997: 175). We argue for a collective equality perspective, which adheres to conceptions of active citizenship. The concept of active citizenship draws upon the idea of active participation by promoting the feeling of belongingness to a community. Participation in political processes alongside civic and cultural participation is an important aspect of active citizenship (Niessen, Yongmi, & Migration Policy Group, 2004). Education policies which are oriented towards active citizenship aim at

enabling all children to play a full role in society. Education for all not only allows individuals to develop their personal potential but also promotes the development of democratic and participative societies.

The reconceptualisation of a 'truly civil society and collective well-being' brings together a politics of recognition and a politics of redistribution (Lingard & Garrick, 1997: 176). Thereafter, we would suggest that the prevailing political culture should shift from 'a process-based social justice orientation to a distributive outcome conception' (Opfer, 2006: 283). Therefore normative definitions of social justice should be rooted in the distribution of outcomes rather than the distribution of access. Social justice goes beyond access, rather than it questions a *politics of equal dignity* which is grounded in all students' equal treatment (Clay & George, 2000: 208).

Fraser (1997) explains that injustice has two facets, namely, socioeconomic and cultural or symbolic. Socioeconomic injustice is rooted in the political-economic structure of the society and refers to exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation. Cultural or symbolic injustice stems from social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication and points to cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect. Fraser argues that redistribution is the remedy for socioeconomic injustice, which includes policies such as the redistribution of income, the reorganisation of the division of labour, democratic decision-making and/or the transformation of other political-economic structures. On the other hand, recognition is the remedy for cultural or symbolic injustice that involves policies such as 'upwardly revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups' and 'recognising and positively valorising cultural diversity' (ibid: 17). Nonetheless, redistributive remedies presuppose recognition and vice versa. As economic disadvantage and cultural recognition are intertwined, Fraser concludes that 'justice today requires both redistribution and recognition' (ibid: 12).

Clay and George point out that a *politics of recognition* should inform education policies for social justice policies. If education policy is to recognise diversity, it should challenge power relations and promote social change. A *politics of redistribution* is reminiscent of Stone's (1997: 44) concept of *vertical equity* which indicates the 'unequal treatment of people in different ranks' in order to achieve the 'same' outcomes. Stone argues in favour of rank-based rather than group-based (re) distributions. She suggests that group divisions across society in terms of demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, race, gender or religion, which are often perceived as identity characteristics, fail to visualise the actual experience of marginalisation, disadvantage or discrimination. Thereafter, (re)distribution according to group membership may disregard important individual characteristics. On the other hand, rank-based (re)distribution assigns people to groups on the basis of 'fairly fine-tuned individual measurements', including individual history, performance and achievement (Stone: 47). Stone suggests that rank-based (re)distribution should take the place of group-based (re)distribution in affirmative action policies. She goes on to explain that whether the same (re)distribution is perceived as equal or unequal, fair or unfair, depends upon a policy actor's (or a network's) point of view and by extension their social justice values.

Social Justice Values in Education Policy

Stone (1997) argues that social justice values play a key role in the development and implementation of public policies, in general, and educational policies, in particular. According to Stone, policy actors who operate across all the levels of the education system have a range of social, ethical and political values. Moving a step forward, Bell and Stevenson (2006: 63) propose that policy actors' values regarding social justice and their normative expectations from education are 'not wholly the product of deliberate rational calculation…but could vary culturally'. Drawing upon Bell and Stevenson, we suggest that through cultural and ideological struggles, actors construct their own assertions, interpretations and axioms of social justice in education. They are educated, persuaded and socialised through ideas to support or oppose certain values regarding social justice. Subsequently, their social justice values become 'the prism through which new policy proposals are filtered' (Bleich, 1998: 93).

We define values as assumptions describing both the current state of affairs and the desirable state of affairs that we want to achieve. Valuing all students equally in a context of cultural diversity is often compounded by diverse meanings and values of social justice. Stone (1997) maintains that values underpinning education policies offer a continuum between equity and efficiency. Finding the best 'mix' between equity and efficiency is often at the core of policy debates regarding social justice. Stone disapproves of a zero-sum relationship between equity and efficiency, arguing that education policies should sustain more equity without sacrificing efficiency. Similarly, Ainscow et al. (2006: 23) depict social justice values as bounded to 'equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, sustainability and entitlement'. On the other hand, they are critical of a standards agenda approach to education, which is primarily concerned with achievement and attainment scores. Still, they point to a social justice agenda that is 'no less concerned with achievements but with *all* the achievements of *all* children' (Ainscow et al.: 29). Policies for social justice should take into consideration teaching, learning and leadership and provide the necessary resources to support the active and sustained involvement of all.

It is noteworthy that values denote certain interests regarding how things should be. Different policy actors pursue different interests according to their sociocultural, economic and political expectations and their own definitions of social justice in education. Interests are formed on the basis of four key values that underpin education policy for social justice: educational, economic, social and institutions. Thus conflicts over interests become conflicts over values, which affect both the process and product of policy for social justice. On the basis of shared or competing interests, policy actors form social groupings that indicate coalitions or conflicts driven respectively by a sense of common or conflicting purpose. The subjective sense of shared interests drives policy actors' participation in collective action (or inaction) for social justice. Consequently, policy actors form different groups (coalitions) that vary according to the levels of power with which they are accredited. Within coalitions, power operates as a mechanism for subordination of the individual interests to the group interests. Group interest is more than the sum of the interests of the

individual policy actors who belong to the group, rather than including things that are beneficial for the group as a group beyond the self-interest of its members.

Ball (2006) maintains that the perpetual interplay of relationships within and between interest groups is influenced by power, which operates through cooperation and loyalty. Policy actors' choice to enter a conflict over policy issues derives from the existence of a group or a network that shares the same interests and is willing to support the same 'version' of ideas regarding equality and social justice. Long-term cooperation creates strong linkages between the network members and, by extension, loyalty. Loyalty may have a counteractive effect; the interests of the network members are influenced by their groups or networks, while the members' loyalty to their group or network derives from the ability of that group or network to represent their interests. Yet members of enduring alliances may feel coerced into continuing their cooperation with their group or network by pursuing their group's or network's policy expectations regarding social justice. Coercion may also derive from the unequal power of those entering the cooperative endeavour. This may result in the subordination of the weaker side by the more powerful one. More powerful individuals, groups or networks may impose their own expectations on the less powerful for the development and implementation of education policies for social justice.

Nevertheless, we propose a concept of power that is not bounded to the notion of *coercion*, which emphasises the capacity of those with power to control the policy agenda and impose it on others. Bell and Stevenson (2006: 21) define *coercion* as 'bounded by rule-making processes with clear expectation that subordinates will implement the decisions of superiors – willingly or unwillingly'. On the other hand, we suggest that power derives and operates through *influence*, as opposed to *coercion*. *Influence* has a powerful impact on policy processes, as it allows for institutions and actors without authority over one another to affect policy processes regarding social justice. Furthermore, influence may be exercised through collectivities of actors (i.e. groups or networks) while also adhering to top-down and bottom-up patterns, as subordinates can potentially influence the decisions of their superiors in the hierarchy. For example, school actors, who are lower in the hierarchy, may not only further but also mutate, 'midgetise' (restrict the policy change) or abandon a policy developed by policy-makers, who are at the upper levels in the hierarchy. Bell and Stevenson conclude that school policies develop through the actions of the individual school actors, which in turn are constrained by their values of social justice. Accordingly, educational researchers should bring together both the development and implementation processes of policies for social justice.

Education Policy for Social Justice: From Policy Formulation to Implementation

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) contend that the development of the policy agenda and the production of the policy texts often seek to 'symbolically' reconcile competing interests and/or conflicts over values. Policies for social justice are thus represented as

advocates of the public interest while they conceal whose values and/or interests they actually serve. We may argue that social justice policies are pictured as profound solutions to perceived problems of inequality in education. Nonetheless, policies through normative judgements about social justice in education impact not only the definition of the problem of inequality but also the solutions they provide to the discursively constructed problems. The normative action to provide resources in support of the dominant values and/or interests draws upon the perpetual interplay of power relations. More influential institutions, groups and individuals may impose their own expectations of policy formulation and implementation on the less powerful.

Additionally, the articulation of system-wide strategy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the practice of social justice in schools. In real-life situations, many policies for social justice are never implemented or they are implemented poorly. On the other hand, Bell and Stevenson (2006: 13) argue that education policy for social justice 'derived from the wider socio-political discourse, is mediated through the formulation of a strategic direction in the national and regional context which, in turn, generate organizational processes within which schools are located'. Moving from policy development towards implementation, the social justice issue formation is shaped not only by the individual beliefs of the school actors but also by the broader political culture and the wider social context. On this basis, action or inaction by school actors on social justice issues depends on the interaction of the political culture and their individual beliefs and values. Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between individual beliefs and social culture, which indicates that the political culture is bounded by the accumulation of individual beliefs. Simultaneously, shifts in individual beliefs about social justice may reflect changes in the political culture.

To this end, Ball (1997) argues that the implementation of policy cannot be examined in isolation from the policy trajectory. He suggests that research should not be located at a single level of analysis (i.e. the school or the classroom), but it should 'attempt to capture the dynamics of policy across and between levels' (ibid: 264). Therefore, Ball (1994) contends that policy trajectory studies map out the interpretations and compromises of policy for social justice across all the levels of the educational system. He goes on to explain that relational constraints and influences play an important role in policy-making and implementation (Ball, 2006). Such influences may derive from both the national and the supranational institutions (i.e. European Union). On this account, policy should be examined through a 'framework that extends beyond the national level' (Ball, 2006: 18).

According to Brooks (2008), policy researchers hold a genuine concern of just development and application of policies that seek to address systemic inequities. Brooks criticises such concern as it triggers an exclusive interest in measurement and objectivity in analysing justice. He therefore argues that the examination of 'indirect' and 'imprecise' measures may prove illuminating for justice-related phenomena, for example, willingness to pay and sacrifice. Brooks (2008: 8) contention is that 'the field might consider in taking a step backward in order to take several forward'. He admits that we should re-examine social justice in terms of multiple and overlapping spheres, such as the interrelationship between social and individual dynamics.

On a similar route, we propose that as policies for social justice are authoritative allocations of values, educational researchers should link the micro-politics of actors' agency and personal relations to a systemic analysis of power structures. To this end, policy analysis for social justice provides also an insight at 'the lowest level of implementation and backs up through the policy structure, examining the decisions that each level makes, the incentive structures that operate on the targets of the policy, and bargaining relationships among actors at various levels of the implementation process' (Goertz, 2006: 705). Our argument is substantiated by previous research carried out in the field of social justice in education. By using Cyprus as our 'case', we aim to indicate the importance of researching the process of implementation of education policies for social justice at the micro-level of the school.

Education Policy for Social Justice: Findings from Previous Research

The prevailing discourses, which underscore educational policy, are formed within the broader sociopolitical context. Corollary to this observation is the examination of the sociopolitical evolution of the issue of social justice in Cypriot education. In a highly centralised system, the state via its agency, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), has gradually adopted the rhetoric of 'human' and 'democratic' schooling as the preferable goals of education in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC], 2010). With the discourse of a 'democratic' school which does not exclude, the MEC promulgated the provision of equal educational opportunities for access, participation and success for all students. The MEC's definition of the term 'democratic' school is 'the school in which all children sustain the qualities characterizing the educated human today. It is the school which provides educational goods adapted to each child's zone of proximal development. While it refuses to assign students to categories, it draws upon the fundamental principle that every child is different and needing appropriate confrontation' (MEC: 6).

Arguably, the MEC has envisioned the creation of a school system that respects diversity and cultural, linguistic and religious pluralism while arguing that education becomes a process accessible by all students. Thus the school system should become conducive to the success of all students despite their diversity. In addition, the MEC (2010: 6) defines the discourse of a 'human' school as 'the school, in which no child is excluded, marginalized, stigmatized, despised or becomes unhappy because of any individuality. It is the school of the absolute respect of human dignity and the school, in which all children can become happy'. In sum, the MEC declares its willingness to promote a social justice agenda while eradicating stereotypes and prejudices. The development of a 'human' and 'democratic' school focuses on the reconceptualisation of educational norms in order to meet all students' individual needs such as different starting points, interests and learning styles.

Hajisoteriou (2010) has conducted a multilevel study examining the ways in which intercultural education policies are mediated and reframed by education

institutions in Cyprus. Her findings illustrate that incongruence of values concerning diversity and social justice was evident between and within the groups of policy-makers, school inspectors, head teachers and teachers. Within the overarching thrust towards intercultural education, the MEC's policy has undermined the development of coherent school policies. In the developed policy, both the MEC and its policy-makers argued for the development of all children's potential, regardless of ethnic origin, religion or gender. At the same time, they depicted social justice as the provision of equal opportunities for access to education for all children. In these terms, social justice was understood primarily as the taking of steps to facilitate access of immigrant students into their schools without any differentiated treatment once in school. Such conceptualisations were bounded on values underlying the celebration of diversity, on the one hand, and diversity-blind approaches, on the other.

At the school level, personnel echoed the contradictory value premises articulated by the policy-makers who participated in Hajisoteriou's (2010) study. Consequently, the absence of congruent intercultural discourses and policy goals at the macro-level of the state was mirrored at the micro-level of the schools. This range of values offered a continuum from monoculturalism to interculturalism from within which intercultural school policies would emerged. As school leaders and actors held contradictory values and belief systems regarding diversity and social justice, there was no evidence of a clear process of development of intercultural policies in these schools. In some instances, school inspectors' and head teachers' promulgation of intercultural school policies was merely rhetoric reflecting socially desirable roles that were remote from actual school practice.

On a different route, Zembylas (2010) has attempted to examine the interrelationship between social justice issues and school leaders' emotions. He carried out a case study of a head teacher regarding the emotional aspects for leadership related to social justice in Cyprus. Zembylas's research suggests that efforts to enact leadership in the field of social justice entailed intense emotional development. Although, the head teacher felt a moral duty to promote school success for all of his students, his emotions of helplessness, disappointment, frustration and exhaustion often led to his resistance towards social justice work. To this extent, Zembylas maintains that leadership for social justice should become conducive to collaborative and distributed leadership, meaning the development of teamwork not only within the leadership group of the school but within the broader educational community. The enactment of social justice leadership prerequisites the acquisition of emotional balance on the part of school leaders through strategies including keeping things in perspective and talking with friends and colleagues.

Angelides and Karras (2009) have completed a comparative study on the provision of equal opportunities in Greek and Cypriot classrooms. Their study provides mounting evidence that the implementation of educational strategies promoting equity is not an easy affair. On the contrary, it is a difficult, complex and beset-with-obstacles procedure. In the Cypriot context, specific factors acted as barriers in the teachers' efforts to provide equity, including the school culture and the policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Furthermore, most of the teachers and head teachers participating in the study did not have the necessary social learning required

to promote equity. Angelides and Karras conceptualise social learning as the learning that comes through the interaction of the different stakeholders within the framework of a community of learning where all collaborate with the purpose of providing equity. The two researchers conclude that in order to overcome the obstacle of educational policy for the purpose of promoting greater equity, we should adopt Ainscow et al.'s (2007) proposal. Ainscow et al. (2007: 3) propose 'the development of national policy frameworks which allow the freedom for local level decision making, guided by principles of shared accountability, local networking, and equity informed target setting'.

The literature discussed above deals with the scarce research that has specifically focused on social justice in Cypriot education, while it mostly consists of small-scale research. However, we may still conclude that despite the presence of a social justice discourse within the Cypriot sociopolitical environment, social justice is often accompanied by witting or unwitting inaction at the school or classroom levels. We then state that in the study of policy for social justice, the micro-politics of policy implementation at the school and classroom levels are of equal importance to the macro-politics of policy formulation at the system level. Nonetheless, the implementation of education policy for social justice cannot be examined in isolation from the policy trajectory. Educational research for social justice should not be located as a single level of analysis (i.e. the state or the school or the classroom), but it should gain an insight into policy dynamics across all levels.

Education Policy for Social Justice: The Politics of Macro- and Micro-implementation

In order to capture the passages from policy decision to policy outcome, we encompass Goertz's (2006: 702) macro- and micro-implementation process; 'that is, how does one level of government (e.g. federal or state) execute its policy in ways that will influence institutions and actors in other levels of the system (e.g. states, districts, or schools) to act in desired ways'. Such an approach involves not only a structural but also a cultural analysis of education policy for social justice examining the ways in which implementing institutions and actors interpret policy and draw their own implementation decisions. Goertz's model of the macro- and micro-implementation process includes four non-linear stages, which we present below. Namely, the four stages are administration, adoption, micro-implementation and technical validity.

To begin with, administration refers to the passage from policy decision to an operational government programme. The policy goals are substantiated in a regulatory framework that consists of selected policy instruments and administrative approach. Such regulatory framework communicates adequate information on the type of support provided (political, financial and/or technical); programme rules, requirements, procedures and service mandates; and programme management. It is noteworthy that strong political support within and outside the school system may

promote policy implementation. Nonetheless, the formulation of social justice policies has historically derived in the light of conflicting political demands, addressing equity, on the one hand, and efficiency, on the other. Such political controversy undermines the implementation of social justice policies at the local level. Moreover, programme management implies responsibilities for policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. Policy planning involves the gathering and allocation of fiscal, human and organisational resources to support implementation. However, resource shortage and unwise allocation of resources impedes the implementation of social justice policies.

The second stage of Goertz's (2006) model entails the passage from the government programme to the local adoption of policy. While the regulatory framework presents the official roles and responsibilities of each level of the system and the education institutions to take these roles (e.g. local educational authorities and schools), the stage of adoption examines the actions of these education institutions as the local adopters of policy. Goertz (2006: 703) poses the following questions to be examined at the second stage: 'What does the local program or policy look like? What assistance and resources did local adopters receive from the implementing agency? Is there discrepancy between the intended and enacted policy? If so, what is the nature of discrepancy and why did it occur?' Lastly, the stages of micro-implementation and technical validity comprise the passages from local adoption to implemented local practice and from local practice to outcomes, respectively. The third and fourth stages are composed of the changes in the practices and technologies of institutions which deliver education services.

The local adoption and implementation of policies for social justice is affected by the agreement between local interests and policy goals, communication between the different levels of the system and the availability of resources for implementation. In the examination of the local adoption and implementation, we should take loose coupling into consideration, meaning that the coordination, monitoring and communication of the system may be weakly connected. Loose coupling bears a neutral connotation for implementation as it may have both positive and negative implications for policy implementation. For Berman (1978), 'looseness' pictures that different education institutions, and the actors operating within these institutions, have their own problems, perspectives and goals according to their specific cultures and structures and that institutions as such have more or less autonomy within the macrostructure of the education system.

We have already argued that for social justice to become a reality, emphasis should be placed upon teaching and learning. Notably, loose coupling within schooling has particular salience for teaching and learning. According to Ainscow (1998: 21), in order to reach out to *all* learners, we should develop 'a more tightly coupled system without losing loose coupling benefits'. That is, we should sustain coordination and cooperation within schools without restricting teachers' autonomy to ground their own decisions in their classrooms according to the individuality of their pupils. The successful implementation of any education policy for social justice at the grass roots relies upon teachers' willingness and ability to tailor their practices to their pupils' needs, interests and learning styles.

Conclusions

Education policies should legitimate social justice as an issue to be acted on in the phases of macro- and micro-implementation. Action at the stages of administration, adoption and micro-implementation of policies for social justice may contribute to the development of democratic societies. As policies for social justice should enable *all* children to play a fully participatory role in society, they substantiate active citizenship as a fundamental element of the learning process. As such, active citizenship does not only aim to empower individuals to reach their full personal capacity but also seeks to develop a participative and democratic society reached by active and responsible participation in the sociopolitical and economic domains of the community. Although social justice policies are often targeted to specific groups (i.e. immigrants), they should purport to promote education for all.

Education policies for social justice as active citizenship need to shift to successful policy implementation, which presupposes communication between the different levels of the school system. Policy goals should be in congruence with implementers' cognitive or value systems. Accordingly, agreement on policy and its underlying values between policy-makers, school leaders and teachers implies strong organisational structures that facilitate policy implementation. On the other hand, the inconsistency between the national policy, school policies and implementers' personal and professional value systems may lead to policy slippage. Bevan-Brown (2006) defines policy slippage as the implementers' resistance to policy implementation. The reasons behind their resistance may be rooted within their personal or group interest, which is affected by the policy, the inconsistency between the policy and their personal and professional value systems and/or poor decision-making processes.

It is noteworthy that policy slippage could 'sabotage' the implementation of promising policies for social justice. Detrimental social and individual beliefs and practices often disrupt the implementation of such policies for social justice. Implementers' responses to policies being inconsistent with their values or lacking cohesion may include the abandonment of the organisation (i.e. school), the expression of their concerns about the policy, or their failure to conform the policy either by mutating the policy initiatives or by deliberately delaying policy implementation. Policy administrators should critically listen to and analyse the implementers' objections, as legitimate objections can potentially suggest policy modifications through mutual adaptation between the policy for social justice and the setting. Otherwise, policy administrators should persuade implementers for the benefits of the developed policy for social justice. Changes in the policy-making and in the practice of social justice should be accompanied by a shift of beliefs, preferences and values related to social justice (*thick learning*) across both the macro- and micro-levels, rather than the adoption of adaptation and coping strategies in response to external stimulations, such as political pressure (*thin learning*).

Changes in the beliefs of policy-makers, school leaders and school actors may be the outcome of learning processes occurring in-between collaborative networks,

which gradually become communities of learning on social justice issues. The implementation of collaborative networks may generate new ‘knowledge’ on justice-related issues, while it may influence the decision-making processes both at the macro- and micro-levels. Such networks are assembled as ‘learning consortiums’, within which policy actors across all levels of the system operate both as learners and partners in the construction of knowledge for social justice (Lieberman & Wood, 2003).

At the heart of a collaborative network, there are people working together. Ideas are generated and activities are implemented. Learning is documented and shared to spark new ideas and to begin the cycle over again. However, these processes, Creech and Willard (2001) argue, do not occur automatically. Collaborative networks, they contend, can cause frustration and undercut the feelings of mutual admiration and appreciation that may have attracted members in the first place. Joining a collaborative network entails a long commitment to collaborative effort. In order for a network to exist at all, Creech and Willard conclude, careful attention must be given to how members will be managed.

Collaborative networks are directly connected with communities of practice and professional learning communities (see Stoll & Seashore Louis, 2007). Wenger (1998) mentions that in most institutions when referring to learning issues, these are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities and that it is the result of teaching. Wenger makes this comment in order to subsequently argue that learning is a social phenomenon and that it is achieved better when there is social participation and in particular when there is participation in ‘communities of practice’. Knowledge, for Wenger, is inseparable from practice, and it is integrated into the life of the ‘community of practice’ where members share values, beliefs, language and the way they do things.

Wenger (1998) talks about ‘communities of practice’ and describes the transfer and the creation of knowledge within a workplace. The members of a community of practice transfer their knowledge and ideas from the one member to the other through the processes of ‘negotiation’ during which common meanings are created. In this way, new knowledge is generated. This knowledge is put into practice and is inevitably modified because it is influenced by new experiences and new contexts. Moreover, this knowledge is transferred from the one member to the other, and it is continually refined and modified. Thus, the knowledge is recycled within the community, and gradually with this cycle, the community increases its knowledge as well as its understanding of a situation. During the collaboration, those who collaborate have the opportunity to work, having common purposes and beliefs and sharing and using each other’s knowledge, and through the process of sharing, reflection and recycle, they create new knowledge.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share what they know, learn from each other regarding issues of their work and provide a social context for this work. For Wenger (1998), communities of practice develop around things that are important to the people involved. The fact that these communities are organised around a certain area of knowledge and activity, Wenger continues, gives their

members a feeling of a common enterprise and identity. In order to function, a community of practice needs to produce and assimilate a common repertoire of ideas, obligations and memories. Moreover, as Wenger points out, the 'community of practice' needs to develop certain resources like tools, routines, vocabulary and symbols, which carry, in a way, the accumulated knowledge of the community. In other words, the 'community of practice' includes practice. That is, in the community of practice, the ways in which members do or approach something are common to a significant degree among the members. The members of a community of practice are virtually connected in a collaborative network where they interact, reflect and have common experiences, aimed towards a common purpose.

Successful collaborative networks – or communities of practice – therefore, have the potential to re-culture the environments within which policy-makers are operating to create more collaborative and multi-agency endeavours (Chapman & Aspin, 2003). In addition, the realisation of across-level collaborative networks can significantly contribute not only to implementers' professional development but also to the improvement of schools in the field of social justice. In these ways, collaborative networks may provide for more effective policy development and implementation with regards to social justice.

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