Shadow Elite of Transnational Policy Networks: Intermediary Organizations and the Production of Teacher Education Policies

Elena Aydarova

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Abstract

Teacher education has long been considered the provenance of national governments. With a shift in the roles of states, regional coalitions, and international organizations, new policy actors have begun to influence teacher education reforms. One element of this shifting governance is the role of intermediary organizations (IO) – think tanks, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, as well as research institutes – in constructing, circulating, and disseminating knowledge for teacher education policies. Operating in the shadows, these groups and policy entrepreneurs have had growing influence on reconceptualizing teaching and teacher education across the world. Their influences have affected constructions of what constitutes sufficient professional preparation, such as modules or microcredentials, and even the models for ensuring the buy-in for teacher education reforms, such as deliverology. Policy discourses produced by intermediary organizations gain traction because of decontextualized proposals they promote and

E. Aydarova (✉)

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology, Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA
e-mail: eza0029@auburn.edu

resource support from venture philanthropies they receive. Even though the IO involvement in the development of teacher education policies may not always be visible to outsiders, they operate as a globalizing force around the world.

Keywords

Globalization · Teacher education policies · Intermediary organizations · Transnational policy networks · Consultants

Introduction

At an event held by Brookings Institution in 2012, Sir Michael Barber – at that time the chief education strategist for Pearson – shared the following observation:

> We're seeing the globalization of education reform. A couple of weeks ago there was a new OECD report that showed that the quality of your education system was more important to the future of your economy than raw materials or possession of oil. Education is fundamental. You see the parallels between Buenos Aires and Washington but also many other cities around the world because school reform is globalizing. (Brookings Institution, 2012)

Similar to other educational reformers and policy entrepreneurs around the world, Barber focused on globalization as an agentless process that seemingly influences school reform without input from human actors. This focus is deeply ironic given Barber's own involvement in educational reforms around the world – from the UK to the USA, Russia, Pakistan, Qatar, Brazil, Kenya, and other countries. Scholarship on the interaction between globalization and teacher education has also implicitly adopted a similar position by examining the impact of migration or "traveling policy ideas" of standardization, deregulation, or rising accountability (Goodwin, 2020; Paine et al., 2016, 2017). Some studies began to challenge assumptions of globalization as an agentless process by attending to the way various policy actors circulate standardized policy packages through their globe-spanning networks (Ball, 2012; Ball & Junemann, 2012). This chapter builds on this foundation by approaching globalization as an enactment of networked interconnections among policy actors across national, regional, and transnational scales. This conceptualization of globalization is informed by the work of Manuel Castells who argued that:

> Globalization is a new historical reality not simply the one invented by neo-liberal ideology to convince citizens to surrender to markets, but also the one inscribed in processes of capitalist restructuring, innovation and competition, and enacted through the powerful medium of new information and communication technologies... Networks are the appropriate organization for the relentless adaptation and the extreme flexibility that is required by an interconnected, global economy – by changing economic demand . . . and by the multiple strategies (individual, cultural, political) deployed by various actors, which create an unstable social system at an increasing level of complexity. (Castells, 1999, pp. 5–6)

Teacher education policies have long been seen as a purview of the state governments. On the surface, state governments continue to exercise authority over laws and bills that govern the profession. But below the surface lies a more complex story. Instead of arriving at policy proposals through democratic deliberation or examination of best available research evidence – normally associated with the functioning of liberal democracies or polities, increasingly more policymakers rely on the scripts produced by intermediary organizations (IOs) – think tanks, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, research institutes, and advocacy groups – that receive support from venture philanthropies. With the help of lobbyists and trained policy advocates, these groups have become increasingly more influential in shaping the directions of teacher education reforms in various countries globally. While other international organizations, such as OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, have also been influential in reshaping teacher education through policy monitoring and "steering at a distance" (Grek, 2013, p. 696), this chapter focuses on intermediary organizations because their role in the production of policy discourses often remains obscured by more visible power structures. This chapter reviews the scholarship on transnational policy networks of policy actors whose policy activities span the globe, with specific examples from the USA as well as Russia, and then points toward potential directions for future research.

Conceptual Foundations

Three theoretical traditions inform this work: global governance, policy sociology, and anthropology of policy. Global governance has emerged as "a response to collective action problems that transcend national boundaries" (Stone & Moloney, 2019, p. 3) and has allowed more actors to participate in policymaking. Non-state actors have grown increasingly more influential in policy agenda setting, monitoring, and evaluation. Global policy emerged through decentralization of policy decision-making in global contexts and through "delegation of authority to semi-private networks and non-state actors" (Stone & Moloney, 2019, p. 3). In this chapter, I focus on the networks of non-state actors with the understanding that

> public and private agents – whether business actors or civil society organizations – directly interact with policy making, policy design, and its delivery through policy experiments like global public-private partnerships and via the porous boundaries of transnational policy communities. (Stone & Moloney, 2019, p. 11)

In the tradition of policy sociology, Ball (2012) examined how global policy networks bring together philanthropies, corporations, international organizations, consultancies, as well as edupreneurs – individual policy actors who approach education policy transfers as a business opportunity (Verger et al., 2016a). Actors in these networks offer solutions to educational problems they help construct and facilitate the movement of policies across regions and national borders. Their message of change is often rooted in the logic of individual responsibility and

market solutions for addressing educational inequities (Ball & Junemann, 2012). Underpinning these proposals is neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). Boundary spanners play an important role in facilitating policy mobility by moving between jobs in different sectors and by amassing influence across local, regional, national, and global settings. Conferences, forums, meetings, and events become sites of diffusion as they give consultants, edupreneurs, and other non-state policy actors opportunities "to speak to and establish relationships with ministers and officials" (Ball & Junemann, 2012, p. 79).

In addition to these theoretical perspectives, I draw on anthropology of policy and Wedel's (2009) concept of "shadow elite" to describe a new breed of influencers who take advantage of decentralization afforded by global governance. Attending to the interdependent roles that influencers perform as they promote policy prescriptions, Wedel calls them "flexians" and the groups they belong to "flex nets" – or networks spanning decades that go beyond social or political connections. Because these policy actors do not necessarily occupy positions of power commonly associated with decision-making roles, their influences on policy-making processes remain oblique for the public. In the field of educational policy, this framework is useful for understanding the activities of nonprofit sector analysts, venture philanthropists, and edupreneurs whose work "has been so effective that it has been virtually invisible" (deMarrais et al., 2019, p. 36).

The work of the shadow elite is characterized by several distinguishing features. First, there is "an intricate spine" (Wedel, 2009, p. 16), or "an intertwined, exclusive, self-protecting network" (p. 152) of key individuals, organizations, or groups that constitute the "gravitational core" (p. 154) of flex nets. In the context of teacher education policies, a small set of the US-based individuals and organizations – Wendy Kopp of Teach for All, Kate Walsh of the National Council on Teacher Quality, Benjamin Riley of the NewSchools Venture Fund and Deans for Impact, and others – have played an important, yet not always fully visible, role in setting reform agendas in the USA and in other international contexts (Aydarova, 2020, 2021a; Kretchmar et al., 2018; Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). Flexians' ability to move between organizations, different sectors, and national boundaries allows them to amass informational and material resources that help them "gain collective effectiveness" (Wedel, 2009, p. 126). In that regard, flexians' access to various funders as well as state officials allows them to gain more advantaged and better-resourced positions in global policy debates. Those who belong to flex nets also "exhibit shared conviction and action" (p. 154), which become the foundation for their policy agendas. Shared convictions of shadow elite in educational policies are reflected in narrow economic constructions of education, steadfast commitments to market rule, and a technocratic belief in depoliticized solutions to social problems (Fischer, 1990).

Flexians are also skillful masters in selling solutions to social ills by crafting media narratives and branding information. This mastery of presentation plays a

crucial role in fabricating the illusion of consensus around controversial policies as IOs steer policymaking communities toward reforms that reflect their priorities "at the expense of objectivity, expertise, and accurate information" (Wedel, 2009, p. 41). In the context of a society-wide turn toward "truthiness," flexians construct and supplant knowledge for teacher education policies that can lack sound warrants and an evidentiary base. What matters most in this context is a convincing performance rather than sound theory or facts. Ultimately, the notion of "shadow elite" is helpful for understanding how these actors influence public policies but remain unaccountable for their effects. In the context of global teacher education policies, whether it is teacher education reforms based on global scripts in Russia or teacher education redesign based on obscure global connections in the USA, policy actors who facilitate these transformations are not called to account when these policies fail or produce unintended consequences.

Intermediary Organizations Produce Globally Circulated Teacher Education Policies

Among the shadow elite of global education governance are IO policy analysts. Since the early 2000s, intermediary organizations with the support of venture philanthropies have played an increasingly important role in reshaping educational policies in the USA and around the world (Anderson & Cohen, 2018; Au & Ferrare, 2015; Ball & Junemann, 2012; deMarrais et al., 2019; Galey-Horn et al., 2020; Reckhow, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Tompkins-Stange, 2016). IOs' growing impact on educational policies has been described through the lens of a hub and spokes with the central role afforded to philanthropies and foundations (Scott & Jabbar, 2014). Philanthropies set the agendas for policy directions, whereas intermediary organizations assemble reports, policy scripts, and implementation guides to set these agendas in motion. With extensive media coverage, these groups' policies emerge as a new common sense.

Most research on intermediary organizations' involvement in teacher education policies has focused on their advocacy for deregulation and marketization of teacher education. In the UK, this advocacy was led by such conservative think tanks as the Adam Smith Institute, the Centre for Policy Studies, and the Hillgate Group (Beauchamp et al., 2016). Their advocacy culminated in the proliferation of providers and a gradual shift toward more school-based routes into teaching. Similarly, in the USA, several conservative think tanks, such as the Fordham Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Pioneer Institute, and the Manhattan Institute, promoted the agenda of deregulating entry into the teaching profession (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). Concerted efforts of various conservative groups on both sides of the Atlantic resulted in the rise of alternative routes into teaching, such as Teach for America (Kretchmar et al., 2018), Teach First (Ball & Junemann, 2012), or independent graduate schools of education, such as the Relay Graduate School of Education (Zeichner, 2016). These routes often require only temporary commitment from its candidates and are based on an abridged form of

preparation for "teaching other people's children elsewhere for a while" (Ellis et al., 2016, p. 61).

As more routes emerged, IO analysts began advocating for a complete redesign of university-based teacher education based on technocratic principles (Aydarova, 2021a). Among other measures, their proposals advanced the rise of accountability regimes (Aydarova, 2020, in progress). In the USA, reforms to hold teacher preparation accountable for outcomes included such measures as candidates' scores on performance assessments, K-12 students' learning gains, graduates' job placement and retention, graduates' classroom performance based on standardized observation protocols, as well as employers' satisfaction with graduates' performance (Crowe, 2010; Deans for Impact, 2016).

Among intermediary organizations promoting outcomes-based accountability measures was the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) – a think tank funded by close to two dozen philanthropies that promotes a conservative policy agenda for teacher education and teacher policies. Treating teacher education as the "industry of mediocracy" unable to "police itself" (Aydarova, in progress), NCTQ designed standards and evaluation tools that echo the measures above. These evaluations of various programs are presented as consumer reports that could inform potential program applicants or their employers about the quality of teacher education programs. The evaluations NCTQ conducts have been critiqued for their lack of methodological clarity and rigor (Fuller, 2014; Burke & DeLeon, 2020), yet they have grown increasingly influential in policymaking circles.

In the context of globalization, accountability regimes constructed by intermediary organizations are enhanced through the exchanges made possible by transnational policy networks. For example, as NCTQ's advisory board member, Sir Michael Barber pitched the idea of an inspectorate for evaluating teacher education programs based on the UK model. Ed Crowe – who also served on NCTQ advisory board and had offered consulting for other intermediaries on how to construct accountability regimes (see Crowe, 2010) – was invited to explore the idea of how to transfer the UK inspectorate model into the USA. After a visit and a write-up of findings, Crowe started Teacher Preparation Inspectorate-US (TPI-US) with a grant from the Gates Foundation. By 2019, over 39 states invited TPI to evaluate their teacher preparation programs, keeping this company busier than originally anticipated. NCTQ, in turn, praised TPI for its bold approach to evaluating programs:

> TPI-US [provides] essentially a comprehensive on-site inspection process imported from the United Kingdom. In its assessment process, teams of four trained education professionals visit prep programs to collect evidence on program quality as well as to provide actionable feedback. They observe student teachers and course instructors, examine data on candidate performance, and conduct interviews with key stakeholders, including graduates and leaders at the schools that hire them—all of which could serve as yet another source of data on a program's quality. (NCTQ, 2016)

Accrediting agencies that work transnationally similarly facilitate the spread of policy narratives about what matters in teacher education. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) was created in the USA as a result

of a merger between the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and Teacher Education Accreditation Council in early 2010s. CAEP's original standards issued in 2013 bore heavy resemblance to the standards designed by NCTQ and aligned with the technocratic agendas pursued by conservative think tanks (Aydarova, 2021a). Those standards were criticized for a heavy managerial emphasis on outcomes often measured through standardized assessments and a lack of attention to the issues of equity (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Despite the contestations around these standards in the USA, they were adopted as accreditation tools in other countries, such as Oman, UAE, and Qatar (Romanowski, 2020). Assumptions about CAEP's universal applicability as well as its disregard for diverse constructions of teacher education turn CAEP accreditation into a tool of global standardization and neocolonial control (Eldridge & Dada, 2016; Romanowski & Alkhatib, 2020).

In part, a growing impact of IOs on policy agendas around the world can be attributed to the capacity and resources they have to translate research into policy and practice (Nutley et al., 2007). Unlike university-based academics, IO policy analysts can dedicate time, finances, and other resources to turning research into actionable items and to marketing their work to policymakers (Tseng, 2012). Recent studies, however, began to raise concerns about how IOs utilize research evidence. For instance, Goldie et al. (2014) analyzed how "a relatively small and selective set of studies is repeatedly cited by other researchers and advocacy organizations within an advocacy coalition to advance a policy agenda. . . The findings of these studies are then simplified as they reverberate through policymaking discussions as proven truths, reinforced by repetition without the nuance and complexity they deserve" (p. 282). This repetition of research findings that support particular agendas have been described as an "echo chamber" effect where apparent consensus is used to convince members of the public and policymakers to take the course of action selected by the reformers. Zeichner and Conklin (2016) described how the US reformers cherry-picked research on teacher education and used observations about a lack of research to advocate for deregulation reforms. The echo chamber effect, in this case, was used to construct rhetorical consensus around abridged teacher preparation outside of university settings, either in teacher academies or in "graduate schools of education" not affiliated with higher education institutions (Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). Repeated across the networks of like-minded actors, these claims eventually surfaced in the GREAT Teachers Act adopted as a part of Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 that provided legislative support for teacher academies, or independent one-year practice-based programs (Zeichner & Conklin, 2016).

Similar patterns of knowledge production and dissemination facilitated by shadow elite actors can be observed in other contexts. In Russia, for example, the national reform of teacher education modernization was justified using claims about graduate employment based on nonexistent data (Aydarova, 2019). Reformers whose careers spanned boundaries between work with international organizations, state institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector propagated narratives of failure of university-based teacher education through the use of an invented

construct – "double-negative selection." Using fabricated figures and tables, reformers claimed that only the "weakest students" chose teacher education and only the "worst graduates" went to work in schools (Aydarova, 2016). These narratives of failure were used not only to produce a dramatic reorientation of teacher education but also to introduce abridged preparation models and alternative routes, such as Teach for All in Russia.

A part of the shadow elite's success is also connected to the way they cultivate advocates in their ranks. Alternative providers train their program alumna to become social entrepreneurs actively engaged in policy contexts. For instance, Teach for America runs a Congressional fellowship program where its alumna are paid $60,000 a year – in contrast to $35,000–$40,000 a beginning teacher makes in some states – to work with Congress on developing legislation pertaining to education (Kretchmar et al., 2018). Other organizations connected to TFA similarly offer fellowship programs where they train practicing teachers to engage with policymakers and to amplify IO policy positions in policymaking contexts (Aydarova et al., in progress). On the global scale, Teach for All emphasizes this kind of social entrepreneurship and supports its alumni around the world in starting nonprofits that address educational issues within the neoliberal framework.

Transnational Policy Networks of Shadow Elites: IOs, Consultants, and For-Profits Disseminate Policy Discourses

Most important of all, however, is IOs' focus on building networks of like-minded actors to create "social movements" (Ravitch, 2020). The resources available in these networks – philanthropic funding, relationships and connections, as well as advance knowledge of what is coming down the policy pipeline – allows IOs to steer educational policy toward the agendas desirable or preferable by donors and other neoliberal reformers. In spite of IOs' ambitious plans and relative success in influencing teacher education policies in the past, most of their policy activities remain barely visible for teacher educators, educational researchers, and members of the public until they become the foundation for state or federal policies (deMarrais et al., 2018). This limited visibility is carefully curated as policy forums organized by IOs that facilitate the spread of their proposals are often "by invitation only," with participation limited to like-minded actors (Aydarova, 2020).

An IO network with a growing influence around the globe is Teach For All. It emerged out of a collaboration between Teach for America and Teach First in the UK It was launched at the Clinton Global Initiative conference in 2007 with extensive corporate and philanthropic funding (Thomas et al., 2020). Promising to address educational inequities for students from underserved backgrounds, Teach for All supports a global network of partners and teachers who "share ideas and innovations across borders and adapt promising ideas in their own countries" (Teach for All, 2021). Solutions for social problems that Teach for All supports include sending college graduates from elite institutions to work in struggling schools for a limited period of time (Ellis et al., 2016; Lam, 2019). Local partners who want to adopt the

model have to enter into a franchise agreement with Teach for All and abide by the rules set to protect its brand name and its reputation (Thomas et al., 2020). Since its launch, it has established affiliates in 60 countries. Teach for All receives extensive support from philanthropic and corporate funders, such as Citigroup, Credit Suisse, BHP Foundation, and Carnegie Corporation of New York, among many others.

La Londe et al. (2015) reconstructed the networks that emerged in conjunction with the spread of Teach for All. Drawing on the analysis of advisory board memberships, they documented the interconnections between Teach for All and other organizations that have been influential in steering teacher education reforms globally, such as the consulting company McKinsey & Co. Teach for All has positioned itself as a policy actor actively engaged in reform in the space of simultaneous knowledge production and consumption. In that regard, it represents a class of intermediary organizations that operate as "'aggregators' selecting or 'pulling' evidence to support a particular agenda" (La Londe et al. 2015, p. 5). Teach for All as an organization focuses on research that validates the organization's approach through self-conducted studies that evaluate its short-term, mid-term, and long-term-impact (Teach for All, 2020b). This framing of research not only departs from basic assumptions of disinterested pursuit of high-quality evidence, but also blurs the boundaries between annual reports on profit-generating enterprises, accountability reporting of performance data, and research studies per se. For example, the inclusion of *Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended August 31* 2016 produced by Teach First under "research tab" on Teach for All's website demonstrates how this blurring creates the illusion of knowledge production. A document that seeks to bolster decision-makers' confidence in the enterprise and starts with the statement "there are many reasons to be proud with TeachFirst's progress is 2015-2016" is unlikely to shed light on the actual impact the program has.

The CEO of Teach for All Wendy Kopp rose to prominence on the global education stage over the decade since the organization's launch. She appeared on panels at OECD's International Summit on the Teaching Profession, the World Innovation Summit for Education, and during events of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Throughout these engagements, her talks deployed consistent tropes about the importance of addressing educational inequities across the world and the urgency of investing into the global network infrastructure that would facilitate learning across borders. Taking the stage among representatives from state and non-state organizations, she spoke as the voice of authority on teachers' professional preparation and the cultivation of human capital for change. During these panels, Kopp also promoted reports Teach for All coauthored with its network partners. For example, during UNGA 2018, Kopp appeared on the panel that discussed a report produced by the Education Commission (2018) and coauthored by the Center for Global Education at Asia Society, Results for Development, the Boston Consulting Group, the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), and Teach for All. The report argued that attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4 and addressing the global educational crisis required the creation of a knowledge sharing infrastructure. This argument implicitly justified divestment of resources away from

struggling communities into the transnational networks of experts, consultants, and other non-state actors engaged in generating knowledge for policy. In other words, it provided knowledge for supporting and expanding educational policy networks based on Teach for All's model.

Knowledge Brokers

Teach for All's networks include other well-established knowledge brokers – people and institutions "who accrue social capital or have a strategic capacity because of their position in the network" (Ansel et al., 2009, p. 721). One of such knowledge brokers is Brookings Institution (BI) – a nonprofit organization that conducts research to solve "problems facing society at the local, national and global level" (BI, 2021b) – based in Washington, DC. The think tank was established in 1927. In 2021, its board of trustees included former vice chairman of Goldman Sachs, former chairman and CEO of Time Warner, Inc, vice president for Amazon Transportation Services, founder of Nike, Inc, chairman of Thomson Reuters Foundation, and a former global managing partner of McKinsey & Co, in addition to several other CEOs of global consultancy firms. The board members come from different sectors, but representatives of the corporate sector and global consultancies predominate.

BI research covers a wide variety of areas: foreign policy, governance, economy, development, as well as education. Historically, BI played a role in setting education reform agendas in the USA. Some of the influential papers on value-added modeling to evaluate teachers were published by Brookings Policy Center in early 2000s and subsequently became the foundation for high-stakes evaluations of teachers in K-12 schools. BI's reputation as a nonpartisan and independent knowledge producer ensured public and policymakers' trust in their publications. BI, however, served as an amplifier of neoliberal reforms by publishing policy briefs that supported the expansion of charter school and teacher academies agendas (Ravitch, 2020).

Brookings runs two education-focused programs. Brown Center on Education Policy focuses predominantly on domestic issues. The Center for Universal Education (CUE) tends to produce research for global audiences by "inform[ing] the development of policy related to global education and promot[ing] actionable strategies for governments, civil society, and private enterprise" (BI, 2021a). Throughout the last decade, BI experts from the CUE worked closely with Teach for All – from panels co-organized at WISE or UNGA to profiling Teach for All approach as an exemplary practice to adopt and emulate. For example, in 2016, BI published a report *Millions Learning* (BI, 2021c) that catalogued educational innovations around the globe that managed to scale up quickly and efficiently. The project was funded by the MacArthur and MasterCard Foundations. Teach for All was profiled as a successful social enterprise that builds "a pipeline of future education leaders around the world" (Kwauk et al., 2016). Through interviews with Teach for All, Teach First, and Teach for America leaders, the case presented a story of the organizations' success and positive impact without any consideration of evidence or research to the contrary. An interesting element of this success story is

the emphasis on individual advancement of fellows and leadership positions in the ministry, government, or corporate sector they came to occupy. Cherry-picked studies show some test score gains among the students taught by TFA or Teach First teachers, but ultimately the gains are accrued by those privileged graduates who through the program gained access to wider-spanning elite networks and moved up their career ladders.

In 2016, CUE experts at Brookings began a project focused on "disruptive innovators" in education. The project centered on the concept of "leapfrogging" – or "the ability to jump ahead or make rapid and nonlinear progress" (Winthrop, 2018, p. 32). The concept came from the work of McKinsey Global Institute that has been promoting leapfrogging as a business development practice that could be utilized across different sectors. The project's findings were published as a book *Leapfrogging Inequality* (Winthrop, 2018), which claimed that old-fashioned systems are contributing to "skill disparity" and "inequality gap." For leapfrogging to happen, established systems and old practices should be jettisoned to make room for new approaches. To address these disparities, members of "the global community" – not just governments or state officers – were urged to advocate for projects that support leapfrogging. Through this project, the CUE team created a catalogue of disruptive innovators around the world whose interventions demonstrated "leapfrogging" in education. Included in this catalogue were government-run initiatives, technological platforms, as well as programs run by nonprofit entities. The authors noted that there were few innovations in "teacher training" that met criteria for being included as an example of leapfrogging.

Among the two innovations in "teacher training" category lauded by Brookings was Teach for All. Brookings experts highlighted the organization's unique ability to bring teachers into hard-to-staff schools – not to address teacher shortages, but to get "disruptive innovation" without relying on government bureaucracies. This time Teach for All's project "Alumni Incubator" was presented as an intervention that meets the criteria for creating leapfrogging opportunities. In a blog posted on BI website, Lucy Ashman – a Teach for All global director for social innovation at the time – wrote that "an important strategy for addressing the global education crisis will come from identifying and fostering teacherpreneurs" (Ashman, 2018). Program alumna who find solutions to local problems receive support to launch their start-ups and guidance on how to scale them up. In 2017, Teach for All launched a Global Innovation Hub "to inspire and accelerate the leadership and impact of alumni innovators" (Teach for All, 2021). The organization maintains a directory of its social entrepreneurs around the world to facilitate further networking across borders.

In its work on leapfrogging, Brookings promoted a neoliberal framework in which Teach for All's work is firmly rooted – inequities exist not because of the inequitable distribution of resources but rather because of gaps in education experienced by marginalized groups. Accordingly, the solution to those inequities is not widescale economic reform that would bring resources extracted or divested from struggling communities, but interventions that can provide more learning opportunities or help students develop a more positive image of themselves (Kwauk et al.,

2016). These solutions ultimately keep systems of inequality and injustice intact, perpetuating the status quo rather than disrupting it (Giridharadas, 2018).

BI operates as a knowledge producer and knowledge disseminator. The book's findings were shared across Brookings' networks, media engagements, and the events where Brookings staff presented their work: "at the United Nations General Assembly, the LEGO Idea Conference, CUE's annual Research and Policy Symposium entitled *Citizens of the Future: Innovations to Leapfrog Global Education*, and various other venues" (BI, 2018a, p. 15). Specifically, in May 2018, Brookings held a day-long symposium *Citizens of the Future* that focused on the principles delineated in the book. Supported by the Inter-American Development Bank, this conference brought together "ministers and authorities of education from Latin America and Caribbean" as well as current and former officials from other parts of the world, including South Korea, the UK, and Kenya, among others. The panelists and the audience included representatives of nonprofit and for-profit sectors, as well as a host of consultants. The sessions focused on various aspects of education that BI experts envisioned as possibilities and opportunities for "leapfrogging." "Teacher training" surfaced as a theme in some of the panels and in questions posed by the audience. The responses were consistent with the neoliberal ideology and technocratic orientation to education – "traditional" teacher education is the problem and an obstacle to progress and success. For instance, one of the panelists – Rachel Hinton from the Department for International Development — explained why she sees teacher education as problematic:

> From my experience living in Ghana and working with the education system there, the pre-service training was not a good investment because it was four to five years of very theatrical training. Many of those teachers never saw a lesson plan, never saw an assessment in the time that they were there, and then they were put in classrooms having to deliver. (BI, 2018b, p. 96)

In this framing, investment into teacher education – especially the traditional university-based or college-adjacent routes – is a waste of resources. Instead of focusing on the institutions and professional frameworks that have apparently failed, panelists offered a search for new solutions. Those included alternative routes, such as Teach for All, or online modules, apps, MOOCs, and other technological platforms, the point to which I will return later in the chapter.

What is important about this event is how it allowed a US-based think tank to bring together decision-makers from across the world to offer solutions for "universalized" problems. The presence of numerous consultants and representatives of nonprofit organizations, including Teach for All, in the same room offered possibilities for disseminating services these organizations and individuals offer across the globe. Whether these ideas were picked up and implemented in the countries whose ministers attended the event would require further inquiry, but the important point is that during this moment of global encounter professional preparation for teachers was dismissed as a waste of resources. Instead, abbreviated routes offered by Teach for All as well as other technology-reliant alternatives were promoted. Like much of

the work conducted by elite policy networks, this event took place outside of the public eye and left little room for academics to offer alternative perspectives, interpretations, or solutions in this policy dialogue.

Consultants and Consultancies

Consultants and consultancies play an important role in transnational policy networks and are an integral part of the "global education industry" (Verger et al., 2016b, p. 5). They work with state governments as well as for-profit and nonprofit actors to prescribe solutions based on "research" evidence they generate. In the process of creating new solutions or offering standardized packages, these actors sustain global neoliberal imaginaries, expand market reach across the educational sector, and maximize profit (Gunter & Mills, 2017). Utilizing the reputational and network capital of their consultants, global consulting companies redraw governance structures by setting policy agendas and by enforcing those agendas through their evaluation reports. One of the influential global consultancies in education has been McKinsey & Co that defined educational reform agendas for various countries around the world through its commissioned reports. Reports that identified problems in educational systems and solutions for them focused on Pakistan, Gulf nations, the USA, and others. More importantly, McKinsey reports (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Mourshed et al., 2010) claimed that their international comparisons identified solutions that would work in any context. These reports garnered wide publicity and spurred educational change across a variety of contexts despite the flaws in their assumptions, methodologies, and treatment of evidence (Coffield, 2012).

In Russia, a group of reformers who steered teacher education modernization reforms over the last decade were heavily influenced by these reports, which were translated and published in full in one of the leading Russian educational journals (Aydarova, 2019). In part, those influences came from close contacts with Sir Michael Barber and appreciation of him as a "charismatic" personality. Barber was invited to speak at several higher education institutions that were heavily involved in steering educational reforms. His visit was used to influence state actors and to polish the policy proposal the reformers were working on. The ultimate policy text that set teacher education reforms in motion was a near replica of ideas presented in *How the World's Top-performing Systems Come Out on Top* (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

In the USA, Michael Barber advised the Ohio State Board of Education and the New York schools chancellor (Dillon, 2007). He gave talks at Harvard's Center for Public Policy, Brookings Center for Universal Education, and Achieve Conference for educational leaders. In 2014, Brookings published a blog post calling Barber "one person always worth listening to on education" because of his work on "'deliverology'—the use of metrics and tight accountability frameworks" to inform decision-making, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Reeves, 2014). His influence has been rarely acknowledged but surfaced in unexpected contexts. In 2013, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) – a nonprofit organization that for

decades brought together state chiefs to work on different educational initiatives across the K-12 sector in the USA – created the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation. The network brought together policy actors from 14 states to generate reforms that would increase the quality of teacher preparation through higher selectivity, tighter accountability, and increased data reporting. Supported by funding from Gates, Schusterman, Joyce, and Bechtel, Jr. Foundations, the network relied on other intermediary organizations as sources of authoritative knowledge and policy guidance (Aydarova, 2020). To generate change, however, NTEP used the principles of deliverology developed by Barber. CCSSO contracted Delivery Institute that Barber founded in Washington, DC, to facilitate the meetings of state teams that were supposed to conceptualize reform efforts:

> NTEP's work was managed by the U.S. Education Delivery Institute under the leadership of Kathy Cox, the former Georgia state superintendent of schools. This leadership was essential in setting expectations and organizing regular meetings, holding participants accountable, and facilitating the critical relationships between each state and the technical assistance provider assigned to it as part of NTEP. (CCSSO, 2017, p. 4)

The steps outlined in Barber's work were used to create teams so that actors participating in network activities would have the power to enact the designed changes. Those steps also included guidance for their work, so that they would accomplish the goals they set. Even progress toward those goals was evaluated and measured using rubrics drawn from the deliverology approach. In 2017, when the funding for the project ended, the outcomes of the network's activities varied by the state but a consistent pattern of more stringent accountability reporting with public displays of teacher preparation program ratings became an outcome common among the participating states (Aydarova, in progress). Delivery Institutes became Delivery Associates. When Barber left his position with Pearson, he focused on the work of Delivery Associates to bring about change in reform efforts across a variety of sectors and international contexts.

Modules and Microcredentials

Common among the approaches disseminated by reformers' and intermediary organizations' networks disseminated by reformers' and intermediary organizations' networks are modular structures of teacher preparation. In Russia, the project of teacher education modernization focused on modules as the centerpiece of reform (Aydarova, 2019). Reformers who advocated for change argued that modules focused on the development of specific competencies would increase the quality of teacher education. Despite the uncertainties of how modules could work in rigid structures of Russian higher education where degrees consisted of a sequential accumulation of courses in academic disciplines, 45 higher education institutions participated in a project of revamping teacher education programs with modules as their building blocks. The promises of improving the quality of teacher education,

however, obscured how a modular structure of teacher education paved the way for more online programs and allowed new providers to enter teacher education market, such as the Center for Regional Distance Education Development (https://distantsionka.ru/) and Rosdistant – Online Higher Education (https://www.rosdistant.ru/).

In the USA, where most higher education institutions utilize a credit hour system, the pioneer in using a modular structure was TEACH-NOW – a for-profit provider started with seed money from the New Schools Venture Fund in November 2011 (Moreland University, 2021). The founder of the program described her frustrations with the ineffectiveness of traditional teacher preparation that prompted her to "go back to the drawing board." This hard restart resulted in an online program structured around a sequence of modules. These included virtual classes and assignments that students complete individually or in groups. To be certified to teach, candidates have to complete eight modules; to receive a masters of education degree, they have to complete 11 modules. In both programs, the eighth module is a 12-week face-to-face clinical experience. To be admitted to the program, students need a bachelor's degree, a 3.0 grade point average, and a writing sample. These reduced requirements stand in contrast to the admissions requirements of university programs – often mandated by the state or promoted by accreditation agencies – that include a number of standardized tests, interviews, and other supporting documents.

Carney (2021) noted that the TEACH-NOW business model emphasizes "affordability, efficiency, and technology" (p. 26). The company pursued legitimacy by securing accreditation from CAEP and other agencies. It changed its name to Moreland University in 2020 to gain more legitimacy as a higher education institution, even though it remained a university in name only as advanced degrees were not required for those who teach in the certification program and instructors were not expected to conduct any research. By 2021, it had "enrolled nearly 6,000 candidates in 135 countries" (Moreland University, 2021). Overall, it represents a transformation in how teacher preparation becomes conceptualized as online modules that are readily packaged for profit generation (Carney, 2021) and for export across the globe (Aydarova, 2012). Online modules along with MOOCs and teaching scripts represent standardization that can be accomplished with minimal state resources and with little regard for sociopolitical contexts, historical traditions, or cultural priorities.

Microcredentials and digital badges in many ways resemble modular structures of teacher education. Digital badging was first introduced in the information technology sector and quickly spread through other sectors of the economy, including education (Muilenburg & Berge, 2016). Over the last decade, for-profit and non-profit providers began offering digital badges for teachers who can demonstrate that they developed specific professional competencies as steps toward initial teacher licensure or as in-service professional development opportunities. Some providers, such as the Center for Teaching Quality, offer microcredentials to teachers based in the USA, whereas others offer services across the globe. For instance, Digital Promise – a national center created by the US Congress in 2011 to advance the use of technology in education – created a library of over 450 microcredentials for teachers. Available microcredentials were created by teams from Digital Promise

itself, Stanford University in the USA, King Mongkut's University of Technology in Thailand, and UWC Southeast Asia – an international school in Singapore. With a network of global partners in India, Australia, Italy, Uganda, Finland, Canada, Argentina, and other countries, Digital Promise can market microcredentials available through its platform across the world.

The spread of microcredentials is fueled by publications produced by the very organizations that offer them. Analysts affiliated with Digital Promise, the Center for Teaching Quality, and Learning Forward issued numerous articles, reports, and policy briefs extolling the virtues of microcredentialing. Their work has been synthesized and amplified by other intermediaries. New America – a DC-based nonprofit – produced a report that laid out "best practices" of microcredential use in professional development and offered policy guidance for how microcredential use can be scaled up across a variety of contexts. An advantage emphasized across different sources is that microcredentials offer individualized and self-paced professional learning. Yet the quality of microcredentials and the rigor of their design range widely: some incorporate one-on-one coaching opportunities, whereas others only comprise files to read, videos to watch, and quizzes to take. Teachers' experiences with microcredentials in professional development have received scarce attention in empirical research (for exceptions, see Gamrat et al., 2014; Gamrat & Zimmerman, 2016). Despite the fact that there is hardly any evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of microcredentials in improving teachers' learning or their classroom teaching (Aydarova, 2021b), IO analysts continue promoting their use through their media engagements and interactions with policymakers. The promise of microcredentials, as was noted earlier, is particularly appealing for policymakers from the Global South who view them as an opportunity to get more people in the classrooms with the promise of as-needed professional support. Whether such an approach is feasible or sustainable remains to be seen, but it does open the possibility of cutting costs on preliminary preparation and speeding up the process of staffing schools. Hence, actors in global policy networks now circulate microcredentials as the solution for teachers' lack of preparation without substantive evidence about their effectiveness.

Summary

This chapter outlined the ways in which global networks serve as conduits of policy ideas and proposals that shape teacher education discourses in various parts of the world. This review indicates that non-state actors use their policy networks to disseminate and circulate policy proposals that intentionally or unintentionally deprofessionalize teaching. What the research on intermediary organizations and advocacy against their measures has also shown, however, is that these groups tend to be averse to negative publicity. In some cases, when their activities are brought to light by policy analysts or educational researchers, they tend to withdraw and direct their efforts to other projects (Aydarova et al., in progress). This observation is heartening to those who are concerned about the growing influence of for-profit and

nonprofit actors on teacher education policies – concerted efforts to shed light on their activities, illuminate their agendas, and bring these groups to account can eventually pay off (Ravitch, 2020).

This review of extant literature, however, points to the need for more sustained attention to the ways in which global networks facilitate the spread of certain ideas that affect teacher education. In particular, three areas deserve further empirical investigation. First, future studies should explore how elite networks operate in ways that allow for their proposals to be traded, exchanged, and picked up by various governments. While new scholarship has focused on the exploration of the policy influences of Teach for All networks, much remains unknown about how various research institutes, think tanks, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropies work across national borders to influence the direction of teacher education reforms. Future analyses of elite networks have to attend to the main actors, their agendas, their policy activities, as well as the policy events that bring non-state and state actors together.

Second, the impact of elite networks' policy activities on teacher education in various locales requires further exploration. As new policy proposals focusing on quick fixes or cheap solutions to long-lasting problems bypass higher education routes into the profession, questions arise about the effects of these reforms on the profession and on student learning. Global spread of marketization, privatization, and standardization of teacher education (Lubienski & Brewer, 2019) have to be examined in greater detail. As new actors participate in reshaping educational governance, they also reset the value orientations of the educational field. The impact of this value reset on the professional preparation that teachers receive has to be better understood. For instance, the question of whether "teacherpreneurs" improve learning or simply perpetuate the status quo of unequal societies has to be examined in greater detail. Additionally, the impact of microcredentialing and modular teacher preparation deserves more careful empirical study than the one afforded by the actors with vested interests in these approaches (Aydarova, 2021b).

Third, teacher educators' efforts to engage in policy advocacy and build transnational networks to counteract neoliberal reforms are worth attending to. As more scholars and groups attempt to build alternative visions of what teacher education can be about (e.g., Kretchmar & Zeichner, 2016), it is important to explore whether these visions are articulated in spaces where policymakers and decision-makers are present. Or, whether and how teacher educators build networks of transnational solidarity or action in their efforts to counteract domestic policies of deregulation and neoliberalization of teaching. In contexts where these activities might be happening, it is worth considering whether policymakers are heeding teacher educators' voices and if not, why elite actors have garnered the authority to be positioned as experts on how teacher education policies should be conceptualized and implemented. Ultimately, the threat of extinction of university-based routes that looms large for teacher education in several countries around the world requires a response from the profession. Documenting this response as a "critical secretary" (Apple, 2012) would serve an important role for the future of the teaching profession and public education at large.

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