

Dismantling Ghana's Educational System? Regime Change, Political Formations and the Politics of Educational Policy Reforms

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"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" – L. P. Hartley (The Go-Between).

Abstract

This paper is premised on the assumption that world-system and national levels political formation are inherently ridden with conflict and characterized at the same time by fundamental contradictions in the economy, the state and education. In these formations, different nations, classes, ethnic and gender groups occupy different positions in extant relations of domination and subordination. Due to the contradictions, there are always groups that try to restructure education to serve their interests. At any time, various groups (both inside and outside of education systems) do express different criticism about education and articulate the reforms that should be carried out, which are precipitated by regime change. This article seeks to enhance an understanding of the political spectacles that have been subsumed under the rubric of 'educational reform' in Ghana. We have attempted to develop not only a clearer conceptualization of what is meant by educational reform but also a more comprehensive explanation of the forces, timing and focus of the associated rhetoric and activities. We have therefore critically reviewed various theoretical approaches that have been used to analyze reform talk and efforts. These include the examination of both national-level and world-system explanations, and we also have attempted to show how world-systems link and subsume the national level hopes and aspirations. With respect to both levels of explanation, we have explored the approaches developed within equilibrium and conflict paradigms and devoted particular attention to the state and its relation to the economy via education. We do not seek to argue that the two paradigms are equally compelling, however we recognize that they reinforce each other. At the same time, we have sought to provide a deterministic account that explains 'educational reform' with reference to political motives, and devoid of the individual and collective actions of citizens as epitomised sometimes by equilibrium and conflict structuralist perspectives. These analyses are rooted through developing an understanding of Ghana's 'educational reforms' as a phenomenon occurring in economic and cultural contexts but driven by political motives.

Keywords: Equilibrium paradigm; Conflict paradigm; Structural Contradictions; Homeostatic Principles; Structural Functionalism; Social Imaginary; World system; Political formations.

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1. Introduction

This paper posits an argument that, from its origin in 1957 to the present era, the Ghanaian State has constantly buffeted by educational policy reforms in lieu of political regime change with tacit support and influences from external sources, which has strongly affected how education is conceived and delivered in Ghana. This phenomenon has tended to diminish national consciousness and awareness of the importance and role of education in driving the development of the nation. Although the reasons for this phenomenon have always kept shifting, the full acknowledgement of the legitimacy of these policy reforms and sovereignty of the Ghanaian State has been doubted for a much longer time based on the incessant interference from external interests. This has created a somehow paradoxical situation that is marked by a long-standing national feeling on the one hand (suffice to remember the resistance to Rawlings' educational policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s), and a relatively troubled process of political formations on the other hand, with sovereignty being continuously challenged by globalism and apparently never fully achieved. These phenomena have negatively affected the development of a sense of purpose for the Ghanaian state. The weakness of this sense of purpose has continually been used as platforms by some external interests to 'dismantle' Ghana's education system up until now. So, in many respects, the evolution of the Ghanaian education system since the country's independence (in 1957) can be read off according to an interpretation that is not too different from one that is usually used in international literature about education policy making and state formation. This points to a much deeper idea that any failure to adequately take into account the distinctive features of Ghana's socio-political situation might prevent an understanding of the nexus between regime change and education policy reform itself.

In order to understand the roots of this situation, issues of international policy and international balances

need to be considered in the first instance. Upon the attainment of independence, these balances were seriously challenged by the consciousness of the independence movement. Years after independence, the movement played a key role for different reasons, to accommodate the external influences in the governance arrangements of the Ghanaian state, to an extent that has probably not been investigated enough yet, especially in terms of education policy and education delivery. However, these policy reforms may be explained in terms of the deep change in political formations with their attendant international influences from 1966 onwards. These have had a profound impact on both educational policies and educational delivery in Ghana, as educational policies made by previous regimes are truncated, while destroying continuity and dismantling the reference framework for national development.

This conditioning has had a profound effect on the ways in which education has evolved in Ghana, which calls for the establishment of institutions to define the features of the education system that is supposed to shape and mold the 'new' educated Ghanaian, according to the dictates and exigencies of a national philosophy of education, which has to be defined in tandem with domestic values and economic factors in which both the forces of nationalism and traditionalism plays a crucial role. In this paper therefore, we seek to conceptualize the terrain on which such struggles take place as containing fundamental structural contradictions, where these contradictions constrain and enable the thoughts and actions of the various individual and groups actors. These embed the basis and conflicts on which actors construct their social reality, including the way education is institutionalized, changed, and discussed.

The paper makes a claim that normative terms, and per the dictates of national sovereignty, educational policy initiatives are pursued by governments to determine the direction of the educational system for the country. This view emphasises the urgency for governments to attach due importance to education delivery, and to approach it with an almost mathematical precision in order to achieve a purpose fit-education. In contrast with this view however, the history of Ghana's education policy reforms has been chequered and characterised by decision turbulence that has emanated from the perpetual changes in political formations in the country. For example, from 1974 the Government of Ghana formed the Dzobo Committee which introduced the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS) education systems. The Ghana Teaching Service (now called the Ghana Education Service [GES]) was set up in 1974 to implement governments' education policies including reforms. The New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE) policy reduced the duration of years for pre-tertiary education from 17 years to 13 years. In this reform, the 6 years of primary education was retained, while the 4 years of middle school (which is equivalent to junior secondary school) was reduced to 3 years. Furthermore, the five years of senior secondary school was reduced to four years which was categorised into 2 years at the lower level whereas the upper level (senior secondary) remained 2 years. The rationale of this reform was to enable students develop job-relevant and employable skills at any point of exiting the education system.

Another committee was set up in 1987 to further review the structure of the above educational system. The main objective of the reforms was to expand and improve the level of quality education, make basic education free and compulsory, and strategically reduce the length of pre-tertiary education from 13 years to 12 years. Some of the key policies introduced in the reforms include the 9-year basic education consisting of a 6-year primary school and a 3-year JSS. A 3-year SSS was introduced. The academic year comprised three terms for both JSS and SSS while terminal examinations were conducted at the end of each term. Meanwhile, Form 3 students for both JSS and SSS (to be called SHS later) were mandated to write the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) respectively. These reforms were enacted to replace the General Certificate of Examination (G.C.E.) (Adu-Gyamfi et al., 2016).

The Committee further sought to infuse the educational system with vocational skills by shifting focus from its previous academic inclinations to a more practical and technological oriented one. The reforms diversified the secondary school programmes into five curriculum including Agriculture, General Arts, Science, Business, and Technical and Vocational. Students were then made to select three or four elective subjects also. This policy reform also proposed the upgrade of polytechnics into tertiary institutions. The regime change of 2000 led to the educational reforms of 2007 which sought to build human capital for industrial growth, preserve cultural identity and traditional indigenous knowledge and creativity, as well as improve science and technology. So, the government introduced a new education system which did not only review the content of the system but also extended the duration of SHS from 3 years to 4 years. This reform further introduced the inclusion of 2 years of Kindergarten into the Universal Basic Education to make basic education 11 years. The reform also required the use of a Ghanaian language as the medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary, and placed emphasis on literacy, numeracy and creative arts at the basic level. However, the change of government in 2009 occasioned the reversal of the policy decisions made by the previous administration with respect to the 4-year duration of SHS to 3 years. In 2017, the Government of Ghana introduced the free SHS education policy to provide free high school education to the citizens of the country but this has not been favourably received by

some of the political groups in Ghana who have persistently emphasised that quality education is what Ghana needs rather than free education (Ghana News Agency, 2012). The embedding assumption here is that Ghana needs to invest its educational resources in the provision of quality education through building good educational infrastructure and technology, training of qualified teachers, and the provision of teaching resources rather than using it to pay the fees of students whose families must be financially responsible for their education. This mantra currently poses a threat to the continuation of this policy should there be a regime change in Ghana. Another strand that associates the political interference is the activities and influence of International Development Agencies who align their interests with particular political regimes. Through their activities and policies, they influence and shape the educational system of the country especially with curriculum reforms, without understanding the underlining needs and exigencies of Ghana (Ghana News Agency, 2012).

In this context, much literature has shown that educational reforms are usually premised on two diametrically opposed assumptions. The first type pertains to those reforms that takes on a wider reach to the entire population of the country such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The second type is where governments either dictated to by their own agenda or through the heist of international agencies (see Odei-Tettey et al., 2020) want to build political capital and therefore embark on educational policy reforms. These have made the change of political regime with their concomitant change in educational policies a bane in Ghana's educational administration and has presented a formidable challenge to the development of the country's educational sector. The precariousness of this phenomenon is expressed in a view taken by this paper that undue political interferences in Ghana's educational system is responsible for the falling standard of education at all levels in the country. And Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panyin II cited by the Ghana News Agency (2012) has affirmed that the political interference in the country's education would damage the country's education delivery and consequently, the socio-economic development of the country.

These normative arguments are linked to a domain of knowledge regarding Ghanaian citizens' democracy in the policy process – what is otherwise called pluralism in policy making. This paper therefore posits that up till the 21st Century, Ghana has been a democracy of voters, not yet a democracy of citizens. This position seeks to highlight two significant aspects of the country. First, the fact that all people can vote in Ghana, and nearly all do as it is obligatory for those aged above 18. And this is indicative of a range of advances in the 21st century that ensured universal formal rights. The 1992 Constitution and the Children's rights statutes form part of an edifice of official guarantees to Ghanaians including that of free and compulsory education at the basic level of schooling and free education at the senior high level of schooling. Yet the progressive and enlightened nature of much Ghanaian legislation and institutional structures is matched by the ineffectiveness and incompleteness of their implementation. Civil rights are to a certain extent upheld only in proportion to the wealth of the individuals involved, and the poor have next to no social rights.

Consequently, in the political sphere, there is formal, but not effective, participation. In general terms therefore, it is possible to see citizenship as consisting of two strands: the passive which relates to the set of rights that the State guarantees to uphold for the individual; and the active which relates to the participation of the individual in the functioning of the State. These form two major paradigms of the Ghanaian citizenry (the liberal and civic republican) with each focusing principally on one of these two elements. The liberal on rights and the latter on civic participation (see Heater, 1999; Kymlicka, 2002). Yet we argue in this paper that citizenship will only be effective if attention is paid to both, with citizens ensured of their civil, political and social rights and taking an active part in decision-making about educational reforms, whether at the local or national level. This means that education policy making is related to both these strands of citizenship. Firstly, education is itself a right and as such, the state makes necessary provision of at least basic education for all. However, education is also a means to ensuring the second strand - participation. Effective participation cannot be 'granted' to citizens (even though the State can make efforts to remove formal barriers). It depends on knowledge, skills and dispositions that must be developed internally by the individual and thus, will occur largely through formal or informal education.

Logically, therefore, effective citizenship raises questions over the quantity and quality of citizens' participation in decision making regarding the educational policy reforms, the extent to which this is made possible by knowledge and skills development, and the nature and orientation of participation within the context of access to education provision. While Ghana has made some policy gains in this direction, these also hide deep and widespread problems of educational policy making and reforms. For example, curriculum development in Ghana has traditionally been characterized by an allegiance to inert global academic learning with little relevance to the local context. This challenge begs the question of whether Ghana's Ministry of Education (MoE) does indeed initiate educational policies and reform policies. This is a difficulty from the backdrop of the role of the MoE in making policies for Ghana's education.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The problem that underpins the current research is that the achievement of educational policy goals in Ghana has

been problematic due to policy reforms that results from change of political regimes. This emanates from the ideological differences that exist in national polity as manifested by the belief systems of the various political groups in the country, which are normally expressed in their manifesto promises. This practice makes policy making contentious and provides the recipe for succeeding governments to abrogate policies that have previously been made by a substantive regime.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study sought to investigate the reasons for educational policy reforms whenever there is a change of government in Ghana

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the goals for educational policy making in Ghana.
2. Investigate the reasons for educational policy reforms and discontinuation whenever there is political regime change in Ghana.

1.4 Research questions

In order to achieve the stated objectives, the study used the research questions below:

1. What are the goals for educational policy making in Ghana?
2. What are the reasons for educational policy reforms and discontinuation whenever there is political regime change in Ghana?

2. Theoretical background

Two key concepts were gleaned from the research questions to construct the theoretical framework thus:

2.1 Goals for educational policy making

The paper concurs with an idea from Theodoulou and Cahn (2013) that, policy should distinguish between what governments intend to do and what they do. They believe that policy making involves all levels of government. Educational policies are made by governments and are imbued with authority to enable enforcement through the various instruments available to the state. This explains the notion that policy is a key process through which the intentions and objectives of governments are determined, and these are mostly achieved via organisational and inter organisational processes (Odei-Tettey, 2016).

A plethora of literature has assigned the incidence of new governments' interference in educational systems to the spread of neoliberal policies around the world. Stephenson and Ling (2014), and Coleman and Earley (2005) have argued that many of the systemic reforms across the world including educational policy reforms are influenced by neoliberalism. Geo-Jaja and Majhanovich (2016) have been emphatic to point out that the weak educational systems in developing nations have been precipitated by the neoliberal ideology. This phenomenon is happening to many nations and regions because they have adopted policies that bear the hallmarks of the neoliberal agenda and these have been pushed in schools for years. This view is further explained by Spring's (2013) linkage of the neo-liberal market ideology to human capital economics as the driving force in the globalization of education. He believes that in the 21st century, most national school systems have adopted human capital goals of education for economic growth and the personal pursuit of increased income. This stems from the pressures of neoliberalism on governments to reform their education systems in radical ways as they address challenges arising from the globalisation (Turner and Yolcu, 2014; Ball, Maguire and Goodson, 2012; Hargreaves et al., 2010).

This global phenomenon induces governments to see education as the remedy to unemployment because per the neoliberal prescription, education develops human resources and provides a well-educated and skilled workforce. In this way, governments see periods of recession as an opportunity to accelerate educational reform that focuses on increasing efficiency in educational systems (Van Damme, 2011), and it provides the *raison d'être* for government interference in educational systems. This points to the view that globalization has a profound effect on education systems in the 21st century. Thus, many studies on the subject have proven that educational policy change has a link with globalization. Studies from Fullan and Boyle (2014); Stephenson and Ling (2014); Turner and Yolcu (2014); Hargreaves et al., (2010), have shown that schools and colleges are not insulated from its environment. Rather, they are contextualized in relation to their external environment at local, regional and global levels. National educational policies thence tend to be influenced to a great extent by transnational organizations through the trends they promulgate (Apple, 2014), and coerce or rather manipulate governments (especially new regimes) to conform.

Furthermore, education has also proven to play a significant role in the development and prosperity of a country's economy. According to a study carried out by Schultz (2014), an increase in the level of education and

training of the workforce results in creating more opportunities for increasing production capacity, increased employment rate and sustainable economic growth. Education also helps in improving health conditions, decreasing the rate of crimes and in building a better living environment, and therefore contributes to the economic growth and the development of a nation (Hawkes and Ugur, 2012). A study conducted by Afzal et al. (2012) examined the relationship between education and economic growth, and revealed that investment in education has multi-dimensional goals that results in an overall national development.

2.2 Reasons for educational policy reforms in times of political regime change

Literature has affirmed that most educational policy reforms and discontinuation are exacerbated by political regime change (Simsek, 2013; Jones, 2013). This is explained by the fact that education policy making is dominated by government initiatives. However, governments are the products of political parties who subscribe to different ideologies which makes it possible for groups and individuals to either support or oppose substantive policies. Consequently, a change of government will likely lead to a corresponding change of educational policies so as to re-channel the country's path for economic growth and development.

Simsek (2013) has argued that, the demands of rapid social, political and economic changes in nations require reforms in the educational systems around the world. There is a debate in the literature that compliments this view – that political competition and ideology are conducive to reform because it increases political accountability and responsiveness. Per the debate, high levels of competition increase incentives for politicians to provide better public goods and services. The argument is that most political parties provide these social goods and services based on their political ideologies that shape the competing manifestoes that brought them into power. In a lot of circumstances, education becomes a cardinal feature in these campaigns manifestoes, and hence education policies are made on this basis which changes the course of the previous regime's education policies. Jones (2013) has however explained that given the exigencies of political accountability and responsiveness, politicians should not have the leeway to define and change the course of education on the basis of party-political ideology but rather, pursue educational policies that will serve the economic growth and development needs of the country.

The cost of education delivery has also been another reason for discontinuation of education policies based on the orientation of the substantive government. The World Bank (2015) has shown that whether in Ghana or the United States, education always takes a greater percentage of the country's annual budget due to the fact that governments are the main financiers of public education especially at the basic and secondary levels. Rationality however enjoins governments to control their spending so as to maintain economic discipline. Consequently, governments will refrain from financing some educational policies that are perceived as superfluous and thereby create conditions for education policy reform. Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016) have explained how the Ghana Government during the educational reforms of 2007 introduced a new education system which did not only review the content of the system but also extended the duration of SHS from 3 to 4 years. Subsequently, when the 2008 general elections occasioned a change of government, the 4-year SHS duration was taken back to 3 years. The new government's view was that the long years spent in school increased the cost of education, so it was pertinent to reverse the policy in order to cut off the one-year spending on the SHS education.

Furthermore, the winner-loser dynamics of the policy process which is an emotive issue for policy legitimacy also account for education policy discontinuation (Jagers et. al., 2016). Legitimacy is one of the foundational concepts in policy analysis and it is associated with support for and compliance with policies. The import of this view is that legitimate policies tend to limit the factors that induce policy discontinuation. The subject of policy legitimacy is debated by two schools of thought in the policy literature. These are first: symbolic legitimacy which is reflected by acknowledgement of the domestic public of the policy, the authority of the policy-making process, and the policy maker (Zilis, 2015); and second, substantive legitimacy which is achieved on the basis of the substance and content of the policy (Mondak, 1994). Nodality is a key instrument used in achieving this as policy makers engage stakeholders in a dialogue to justify their policy positions (Goddard and Krebs, 2015; Tjalve and Williams, 2015). Consequently, acceptance of the policy is determined by the public's evaluation of the perceived justification.

Donor practices also have the penchant to align with regimes that buy into their philosophy and use them to perpetuate their economic and educational agenda in the host country and lead to the discontinuation of some education policies in the host countries (Bermeo, 2016). The idea underpinning this view is that educational policies are thought of as a machinery for development and good governance. In time, new governments in developing countries come under the trappings of financial aid inducement from donor agencies to discontinue existing education policies and replace them with their recommended policies. This is done under the pretext of enhancing economic development. However, the motives are always very different from the reality and the goals are rarely achieved (Bermeo and Altinyelken, 2012; Sogge, 2015).

3. Methodology

The philosophical worldview that guided this study was phenomenology and it focused on the subjective and lived experiences of the participants in the research (see Hancock et al., 2009; Tuffour, 2017). The study knitted this philosophy to interpretivism to enable the research to construct socially and multiple perspectives of policy reforms in lieu of political regime change into composite ideas. Per the logic of this philosophy, the qualitative approach was used to conduct the study which conditioned the research to be carried out in a typical policy reform context, and interpret situations to understand the meanings that people make from day-to-day experiences of educational policy reforms (see Walia, 2015). The study used interviews and focus group discussions to gather data. The site for the study was Ghana. The country was divided into the southern and northern zones to simplify and enhance the data collection process. The respondents for the study included head teachers and teachers at the pre-tertiary level, parents, University lecturers with backgrounds in education, political science, and policy analysis, as well as retired directors of Education. This classification made the population for the study which Saunders et al. (2012) define as “the full set of cases from which a sample is taken” a heterogeneous one. The sample used to represent the population of interest was constituted by using first, the expert sampling method of purposive sampling to select 3 respondents for interviews from the expert category (University lecturers) and second, convenience sampling was used to select 9 teachers (including heads of schools) and 9 parents from each zone making a total of 36 respondents. These were put in 4 focus groups for data collection. The total sample size for the study therefore was 39. The study established the trustworthiness of the data through procedures like credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability (see Schreier, 2012; Polit and Beck, 2012; Saldaña, 2011). The data was analysed in the thematic data analysis framework which required the data to be organised across all the responses so as to identify consistencies and differences.

4. Data Analysis and Discussions

The data was analysed under two concepts thus:

4.1 Goals of educational policy making in Ghana

Table 1 provides a picturesque view of the qualitative data on educational policy goals in Ghana and their sources.

Table 1: Goals for educational policy making in Ghana

Basis for education policymaking	Data source
1. National needs	Interviews
2. Balance of access, cost and quality	Focus group discussions
3. Political motives (self-interests of politicians)	Focus groups discussions
4. Manifesto promise	Focus group discussions
5. Inadequate use of data for previous policy making	Interviews/ Focus groups
6. Hopes and aspirations of stakeholders	Interviews/ Focus groups
7. Political party ego	Focus group discussions
8. Functionality of the education system	Focus group discussions
9. National development	Focus groups/ Interviews
10. Donor interests	Interviews

Source: (Authors, 2022).

The data indicates that setting goals for an educational policy is of utmost importance. Hence, educational policies should at the onset be oriented towards very specific goals to provide direction and purpose for the policy. The data showed that policy goals therefore determines to a large extent, the sustainability and effectiveness of educational policies. Interview respondent # 3 argued that the purpose of an educational policy should be underpinned by the needs of the nation hence, Respondent # 4 believes that:

There is the need to have a balance between access, cost and quality when it comes to education policy making. However, political leaders are only interested in access, taking into account a little cost, and leaving the quality out, which I believe does not auger well for us (FGD, Respondent #4).

The data further indicated that “educational policies are driven by political motives.... This government comes and say three years of secondary education and another says four years. Are they just interested in effecting changes?” (FGD, Respondent #2). This data is corroborated by Interviewee # 2 who believes that educational policies are largely formulated based on political motives. Another view is that:

Most educational policy processes in Ghana are engulfed in politics. Politicians campaign on promises so they try to fulfil these promises when elected to form government. An example is the National Patriotic Party’s free SHS. The NDC on the other hand is opposed to the free SHS policy so they are likely to change it when they take a turn in government. If you also look at the teacher and nursing training allowances, they were restored to obtain political capital (FGD, Respondent #3).

Respondent #7 from the focused groups also argue that:

the decisions for educational policy reforms and discontinuation in Ghana is politically based. Politicians are always striving for power and therefore draw lots of education issues in their political manifesto. They translate these promises into policies once they win the elections and stay the course in order to perpetuate their stay in power.

This data concurs with an idea from Odei-Tettey (2021) that politics cannot be separated from policy and that policy determines politics. He argues that this phenomenon explains why the policy process is fraught with conflict.

The data has shown however that most education policies are unable to achieve their goals due to the exclusion of pertinent stakeholders, especially policy implementers in the policy formulation process. This practice mostly leads to unmet policy goals which consequently calls for policy reforms. Respondent #2 believes that in this way:

the government short change itself because the levels of exclusions in education policy making takes away the full range of experienced persons from the policy process. Hence, such policies will be lamed and unable to achieve their goals. So, it is important to have a policy process where the stakeholders can be brought in early to make their inputs.

The data also pointed to the non-use of adequate data for policy making which pushes subsequent governments to continually change and reform previous education policies. Interview respondent #1 believes that, information on policies must be available before the implementation stage rather than having to seek this information at the time of implementation. This is important for enhancing the implementation process. The absence of information has impeded policy implementation enormously in this country.

The data also established the relevance for policies to be based on the hopes and aspirations of the public and hence, the success of policies largely depends on consultations with the beneficiaries. The focus groups data further argued that:

Policy goals are likely not to be met because most stakeholders are not involved in the policy formulation. Practically this means that policies can have very beautiful goals but the exclusion of beneficiaries at the formulation stage will fraught its implementation with challenges, which will demand policy reforms at a later stage. This suggests that the more beneficiaries are involved in policy formulation, the more effective the implementation process will be, and hence the less possibilities for reforms (FGD, Respondent # 16).

The focus groups data added that:

Some educational NGOs are doing so well with their policies owing to the fact that they actively engage the beneficiaries in the formulation, planning and implementation of their policies. This means that the success of policies is largely tied to the active engagement the beneficiaries (FGD, Respondent #8).

Respondent # 11 from a focus group confirms this view:

Non-involvement of policy beneficiaries in the policy process leads to unmet goals. A properly crafted policy process which include stakeholders will be met with fewer reforms because there will be minimum opposition. Unmet goals of policies are a major reason for educational policy reforms in Ghana. There is over ‘politicization’ of educational policies, but the paradox of this whole phenomenon is that the so many reforms in education come just in name. Nothing really get changed as the content and resource allocated to them are the same.

The focused groups data assigns other reasons like political party ego (FGD, Respondent #17), functionality of the education system (Respondent #15), and purpose-fit development education reforms (Respondent # 9). Interviewee # 2 also sees the discontinuation of some education policies as “... driven by donor interests where donors make funds available for the transformation of the curriculum or education delivery in the country and these call for educational reforms”.

These aspects of the data points to a phenomenon that has taken place in Ghana and most regions of the world since the mid-1970s. In this era, there has been extensive rhetoric and activities that are characterized as ‘educational reform’. This is however not to suggest that educational reform is only a recent phenomenon. Indeed, such rhetoric and activities have a long history. Neither is it to posit that what is always labeled ‘educational reform’ is always concerned with changing and improving education. Rather, the goals, practices, purposes, and consequences of the phenomena of ‘educational reform’ must be treated as problematic, worthy of investigation and deconstruction within the context of political regime change.

This paper defines educational policy reform by categorizing it in terms of the goals for educational systems of the social transactions involved. Thus, educational policy reforms have been described here to focus on changes in various aspects of educational systems such as: size or number of students, teachers, administrators, and buildings; policy-making and the administrative/managerial system or power structure; and financing and budget-making processes. However, not all educational reform activities are intended to change some aspect of educational systems. Indeed, this paper seeks to argue that many of the educational policy reform in Ghana have had a placebo effect. This means that such reforms are just symbolic gestures that are designed to indicate

government's awareness of existing educational problems. Hence, these educational policy reforms rather carry sympathetic intentions, rather than serious efforts to achieve educational and for that matter social change. This view suggests that the rhetoric and activities linked to educational reforms functions to afford legitimacy to those with political power rather than to induce educational and social change. Consequently, the paper argues that most of the attention given to education (whether serious and sustained or not) operate to deflect concern or conflict from economic, political, and cultural problems. This makes it important to examine both the manifest and latent functions and consequences of educational reform regimes for both education and society.

Second, the data points to the illusions of the consensual model of societal and global relations regarding education reform. In this direction, the paper argues that there are reality-based differences in perceptions of what the goals of education should be and in what ways education should prepare future generations for their participation in society. This means that the goals and consequences of educational policy reforms will be evaluated differently by disparate groups especially with respect to the reform's effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance. So Altbach (1974) has long ago observed that what may seem as constructive change by some people, may be perceived by others as either tokenism, destructive or regressive change. Consequently, Green et al. (1980) have also suggested that educational systems must maintain a high degree of autonomy. They believe that the educational systems of countries have a life of their own, and argued that an educational system has a logic or practical rationality of its own such that "the behaviour of the system, its inherent processes, may become intelligible in a way that is independent of differences in political and economic ideology" (Green et al., 1980). Nevertheless, Merritt and Coombs (1977) have said that "the evidence is now in-controvertible that in most nations virtually all educational decisions, certainly including efforts at major reform, are highly interrelated with concurrent events in the cultural, social, economic, and political realms." We make an argument in this paper that Merritt and Coombs' view is the ideal phenomenon if induced domestically, and that must characterize all educational systems, including Ghana's. On the contrary, Ghana's educational policy reforms as depicted by the data are driven by secret dealings and forces that have mostly no bearing on the four realms internal to the country. However, Simmons (1983) has proffered that "political and economic factors are more important in shaping educational reforms than are factors internal to the educational system itself". The paper believes that these political and economic forces must be borne from Ghana (Odei-Tettey et al., 2019; Sadler, 1979) and these must have relevance to Ghana's educational goals. In making this claim, however, we adopt a deterministic perspective which suggest that Ghana's educational system and its actors are structured by external systems and forces. As we shall explain further in our conclusion, education must be interrelated with broader societal parameters, but it should be relatively autonomous nonetheless. This means that regardless of the degree of education's autonomy, the society's culture, economic, and political imperatives must be framed in a model to explain educational reform, and this model must be borne from the 'home soil' (Sadler, 1979).

This view points to the dichotomy of educational policy reform analysis based on assumptions of either equilibrium theory or conflict theory, which conceptualizes the relationships between education and the social forces as occurring at the national or the world-system level. Consequently, the data is analyzed around four general theoretical models defined by the cross classification of the two dichotomies mentioned. These are: national-level equilibrium; national-level conflict; world-system-level equilibrium; and world-system-level conflict classification. In discussing these four models we will devote special attention to the 'state' which is a concept that is central to understanding education and educational reform (Hill, 2005). Paulston (1983) has distinguished between 'equilibrium' and 'conflict' paradigms in his "review of major theoretical perspectives on educational change-cum-reform at the national level". Within the equilibrium paradigm, change in education is interpreted as natural movements toward higher stages of societal development, or adaptations required by system imbalances, or societal needs. The paradigm believes that society is fundamentally consensual and it functions on the platform of homeostatic principles. Thus, the paradigm stresses the importance of functional integration, harmony, and stability. It assumes *à priori* that all members of society implicitly agree to what constitutes the functional necessities of the society (Simons, 1983).

The national-level equilibrium approach to the analysis of educational reforms examines the boundaries of nation-states, and the assumptions underpinning the functional or system theory. Paulston (1983) has argued the structural-functionalist variant of the equilibrium paradigm of educational policy reform to be the result of interaction between society and the schools, which proceeds on five key steps as illustrated by Figure 1 (below):

Structural-functionalism process and result of interaction between society and school	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.a need arises in society 2.the school is assigned the task of meeting the need 3.change in the educational structure takes place to accommodate the new function 4.the new role is assumed by the schools 5.latent and manifest changes take place in society as a consequence of the new educational functions.
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Source: Authors (2022).

Figure 1: Structural functionalism analysis of national-level equilibrium educational policy reform

Figure 1 is based on the 5 levels of interaction between society and school from Paulston (1983) and it shows that based on the assumptions of the equilibrium paradigm, education is changed because the needs of society such as decentralization, modernization, industrialization, or urbanization. Situations occur when these parameters are not fulfilled by the existing organization, content, and processes of education. Consequently, the educational system, seen as a part of the larger homeostatic social system characterized by consensus, evolves and adapts as these functional incompatibilities or dysfunctions in society arise. This means that as societies become modern and rational, their needs change, and educational systems must adjust to this change. Consequent to this line of thought, the paper presents a thesis that: *'the timing and focus of educational policy reform and the reform in the educational subsystems are determined by societal urge to maintain an equilibrium in a homeostatic system that is undergoing change in the other sub-systems'*.

The conflict paradigm of educational reform on the other hand points to "the inherent instability of social systems and the conflicts over values, resources, and power that follow as a natural consequence" (Paulston, 1983). This perspective emphasises that educational change occurs through conflict and competition between social class, ethnic, national, religious, and gender groups, whose interests are incompatible, or when structural contradictions (e.g., in the economy) are unsuccessfully mediated. This paradigm is not situated as part of a homeostatic system's response to functional incompatibility that may arise from time to time. On the contrary, the paradigm interprets educational policy reform to be part of on-going struggles and tensions between groups, whose interests are fundamentally in conflict, and its social relations are inherently contradictory. Odei-Tettey (2022) has contextualized the conflict approach in the Marxist ideology to explain that the timing and focus of educational reform has an affinity with class relations under the capitalist mode of production with implications for education delivery and sometimes manifested in Ghana in terms of political parties' involvement in contradictory social relations driven by their ideologies. This view corroborates Carnoy and Levin (1986) argument that the "dynamic of education ... can best be understood as a condensation of a much wider social conflict inherent in capitalist development". From this perspective the paper argues that education, the state, and other superstructural institutions exacerbate contradictions in the economic base of society which translates into the inherent contradictions within education and the state.

4.2 Reasons for truncating educational policies in Ghana

The research sought to find out why succeeding governments of Ghana are fond of truncating and replacing educational policies when they assume office. The interview data point to the governments' attempt to gain political leverage over their opposite parties. Interviewee #1 believes that "the reason for educational policy discontinuation by governments are more often political as they are normally attempts by the substantive government to prove themselves as a better government than their predecessor". The respondent then cited an example from the oscillation of 3-year and 4-year senior high school duration and pointed out that this comes as a cost to the nation and "it stems out of the lack of understanding of what we really want as a nation" (Interview data, Respondent #1). In a similar manner, the focus group discussions revealed that educational policy making should not be at the sole behest of politicians who usually have a short tenure of office but the more permanent civil servants who have expertise in the area must be engaged more heavily.

The data further ascribed part of the reasons for policy discontinuation to cost of education. The view given on this is that there have been instances where governments have abandoned some educational policies due to the cost of financing the policy, but introduces a contradiction by sponsoring other non-educational policies in spite of the cost. This position is expressed thus:

... politicians prefer short term policies that can be seen than long term impact related policies. They ... prefer to invest in roads, hospitals, etc owing to the four-year political cycle The truth of the matter is that, Ghana's educational policies need to reflect more of technical and vocational content, but they are not ready to finance such (Interview data, Respondent # 3).

Rather, "they pick and choose policies just because they want to be famous and to be seen as working and having the people at heart but mostly, these tend to be the same policies that have simply been repackaged to represent their own interests" (Focus Group Discussion data, Respondent # 21).

Participants during the focus group discussion unanimously agreed that governments abandon some educational policies due to the cost involved, political ambitions and self-interests. According to the data, Ghana's regime of 2009 reversed the 4-year SHS duration to 3 years because of the cost of constructing new dormitories, classrooms and paying for human resources to cater for the 4-year SHS policy that was made by the previous government. Another theme that emerged from the data emphasised measures for sustaining educational policies in Ghana. In this regard, the data indicated a number of other factors that create conditions for education policy discontinuation whenever there is a political regime change in Ghana. The data showed the use of inappropriate policy instruments for education policy implementations to be a key factor. The data took a case from Ghana's school feeding policy that:

the policy came under critique for the quality of the food. Although policies are subjected to face

challenges, the real question is whether the extolled challenges are real or staged to gain political capital. Every policy is likely to face challenges, especially in terms of the appropriate and suitable instruments for the implementation process and it behoves policy makers to identify these problems and prepare for them. This is perennial. The school feeding was pushed by the UN just like the SDGs. The challenge has always been whether as a nation we think through these policy recommendations well, especially regarding both the material and human resources that associate the implementation of such policies, as to whether they are appropriate to guarantee success (Interview data, Respondent #2).

The data indicated that the exclusion of relevant stakeholders in the policy process is a second factor for education policy discontinuation. The interview data showed that “when stakeholders are not engaged in the policy process, poor quality policies are made and opposition to the policy also emerge as implementation will not yield the needed outcomes’ (Respondent #1). The focus groups discussions complimented this view by citing the new standard based curriculum policy and argued that the policy may be heading to the doldrums because the central implementers lack the basic understanding of the pedagogies involved in the policy. These implementers were only engaged in training for just five days which did not offer them any conceptual understanding, and were not part of the policy formulation process either. The data was emphatic that the exclusion of stakeholders in policy formulation process is likely to lead to a total failure and waste of resources (see Odei-Tettey, 2021). This stems from the fact that the teachers were not engaged so they are likely to adopt a street level attitude towards the implementation of the policy which will undermine the achievement of the underlying goals (Odei-Tettey et al., 2019). The data further shows that the problem of ambiguity of policy goals has been a characteristic feature of policy reforms. The logic of this view is that, the more ambiguous a goal is, the more difficult it is for the goal to be implemented. The data showed that:

when a policy goal is ambiguous, it is suggestive of a difficult implementation process. Ambiguity of policy goals is the result of non-comprehension of the problem for which a policy was formulated. There is therefore the need to constantly research into issues before the formulation of policies. Policies are driven by situations, and these situations are best understood when research has been duly conducted and the resulting data is well understood (Interview data, Respondent # 3).

This view is complimented by another interview data that:

when policies are ambiguous, it becomes difficult to clearly set appropriate goals for the policy. This phenomenon is responsible for the many students that have trooped into SHS education. After they have graduated, there are no further training opportunities available for them and neither can the higher institutions currently available in the country absorb them all. Not even 60% of the cohort who qualify can have places in the country’s higher education (Interview data, Respondent #1).

Policy ambiguity problems can be exacerbated by policy implementers use of discretion in decision-making. Discretionary decision-making in policy implementation has the tendency to determine whether or not policy goals can be attained. Consequently, in order to ensure the attainment of policy goals, discretionary decision-making should be predicated on organisational values so as to reduce the level of conflict that associate the policy implementation process (Odei-Tettey, 2021). The data has indicated that wrong discretionary decision-making by policy implementers affect the sustainability of educational policies negatively thus:

The functions of policy implementers like bureaucrats involve meticulous and extensive use of discretion. The government may decide to give scholarships to bright and needy students but when it comes to the determination of who qualifies as ‘needy’ a large amount of discretion would have to be used to determine who qualifies to be in that category. Such people exercise discretion, their discretion should not be frivolous so as not to undermine the sustainability of the policy. In the educational sector, policy implementers do not always adhere to the rules that have been given. Government may come up with a policy to admit 40% boys 60% girls for a project, but when the head master decides that he will not comply, the policy is then perceived as failing and consequently, it is truncated (FG data, Respondent # 6).

The data also showed that the neoliberal agenda has also been influencing the policies of developing countries negatively, and Ghana has been scathed by this influence as well, especially in the education sector. A respondent observed that:

The lifestyle and culture of this country has been under immense influence from the IMF and World Bank such that, the nation’s educational system mostly want to adopt business related programmes. Being educated has now come to mean, being able to run your own business. Neoliberalism has come to make people to skew towards possessing more cars, houses etc. We acquire degrees and are jobless, that is the effect of neoliberalism on Ghana (FG data, Respondent # 4).

Geo-JaJa and Majhanovich (2016), have supported this view and argued that the contradictions in educational systems in developing nations is as a result of neoliberalism. And Apple (2014) believes that too many nations and regions have instituted policies that bear the hallmarks of the neoliberal agenda that has been pushed in schools for years leading to most educational policy reforms in developing nations. Odei-Tettey et al.

(2019) have said that this enjoins developing countries to distance themselves from such policy recommendations that have no bearing to the country's needs and aspirations.

The data was thus emphatic that educational policy prescriptions by donor agencies account for the many educational policy discontinuations by new regimes. The embedding idea is that Ghana's educational policies are mostly driven by the policy prescriptions from donor agencies in lieu of their readiness to fund such policies. This view was expressed in statements like:

... we have allowed ourselves to be poor, and those who run the countries are always interested in driving four-wheel vehicles. These acts almost always end us up with budget deficits which compels us to seek financial assistance from donors. This form of donor assistance come with certain conditionalities that tends to distort activities in the economy. So we end up putting the nation's educational policy process in the hands of donor agencies and we are forced to comply with their dictates because we need the money (FGD, Respondent # 13).

The data again showed that bilateral agreements between Ghana and some advanced countries as well as those with transnational organisations like the IMF and World Bank also feature in this same domain. These are world-system level issues that seek to explain the motives for governments to reform their education systems in radical ways to address the challenges arising from the global agenda (Turner and Yolcu, 2014; Ball et al., 2012; Hargreaves et al., 2010).

The data analysis at this point takes a view with an observation by Dale (1988) that the dynamics of education systems results from three core problem areas confronting state education systems. These core problems are: the support of the capital accumulation process; guaranteeing a context for its continued expansion; and the legitimization of the capitalist mode of production, including the state's own part in it (Cherryholmes, 1988). It is important to clarify though, that from this perspective, reform in education is not some natural evolutionary development or functionally necessitated adaptive response to the 'needs' of the capitalist political economy. Rather the contradictions within and between the economy and superstructural institutions, such as the state and education, constitute the terrain on which the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (and their allies within the middle classes) struggle (Carnoy, 1982). These struggles on the structural and ideological levels become labelled as 'educational reform'. It is however intriguing whether this label is associated with concerted efforts to change some or more aspects of education.

This portends that the occurrence of crises in the Ghanaian economy explain the occasioning of most educational reform activities. Consequently, the focus of most educational reforms in Ghana, in both its rhetoric and practicality is shaped by the struggles between classes and other groups, who are constrained and enabled by the contradictory dynamics within the economy, culture, households, education, politics and the state. In some other circumstances where no concrete changes are attempted or implemented, an ideological struggle may occur as it is usually the case between National Democratic Congress and National Patriotic Party or formerly between the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and the then prevailing liberal groups in Ghana. And while the focus of the crisis may be deflected from the economy, issues addressed in reform efforts may still implicitly or explicitly concern the relation between education, the state, and the economy. These relations are usually contextualized in terms of the cost and control of education, the kind of work force it is designed to produce as pertained in the JHS/SHS reforms in the 1980s. In most of these reform programmes, real changes were attempted in how the work of educators is conceptualized, organized, and implemented as well as in educational content and processes as individuals and groups struggled to serve what they perceived as their interests in the context of contradictory social relations.

The world-system-level explanations is also advanced in this paper in lieu of regime changes in Ghana. This framework in consonance with some national-level explanations of change and reform in education, have tended to focus on the state, especially in terms of global trends of increasing state authority and power and of national government incorporation and control of education (Remirez and Boli-Bennett, 1982). In analyzing states in the context of culture, the economy, and educational systems, it is important to note that world-system-level approaches focus attention beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Ramirez and Boli-Bennett (1982) have pointed out that, "educational systems ... cannot be explained by standard comparative education discussions that perceive national systems as essentially autonomous units that develops in accordance with endogenous social and political forces". On the contrary, it is instructive to speculate that the world educational crisis, (which Coombs published long ago in 1968 and helped to precipitate a widespread debate and a re-examination of previously accepted educational orthodoxies) may have shaped the rhetoric and actions that relate to educational reform. Coombs suggested then that the world educational crisis has been created by an increasing disparity between educational systems and their environment, especially the economy. This view enjoins the school system to take on the function of creating citizens in response to the needs of the society and its environment – what Sadler (1979) classifies as 'the right spirit of education'.

Contrary to this prescription however, the paper presents a view that sees the educational policy reform efforts in Ghana covering areas such as: financing, organization, content, and practice as largely conditioned by

the world system of capitalist production through the way that the country's production and natural resources operates in the world economy, and by the way class conflict has developed in this context. This view expresses the thrusts of the world-system level conflict approach where countries in the periphery of the global system perceive the construction and reform of education in connection with social relations of domination and subordination that characterize the world capitalist system. So indeed, Carnoy (1982) has argued that educational reforms require at least the tacit support (or partial defeat) of local economic elites as well as powerful groups outside the country. Consequently, this paper believes that the world system is not a static system. So, Hopkins and Wallerstein (1982) have said that “core processes and peripheral processes are constantly relocated in the course of the world-system's development”. This means that nation-states and regions do not necessarily have fixed positions in the world system. Besides, world-system dynamics occur through social struggles that takes place on a terrain that is characterized by a set of fundamental contradictions as argued by Merritt and Coombs (1977). Thus, educational reform tends to embody contradictory movements such as commented by Carnoy and Levin (1986) regarding efforts to “reproduce the educational inequalities required for capitalist efficiency and those which equalize opportunities on behalf of social mobility and democratic participation.”. This explains the rationale of the Ghanaian state to promote educational reforms, particularly in times of economic crisis, which further and partly explains why it often finds itself in a credibility and legitimation crisis. So, the state's efforts to propose and implement educational reforms must be understood not just in relation to accumulation and reproduction processes of the economy but also in terms of attempts to maintain or re-establish its own legitimacy. Weiler (1988) has explained that,

as the modern state ... faces a chronic deficit of legitimacy, the recourse to the legitimating potential of symbolic action becomes an important strategy. ... the idea, it seems, is to maximize the political gain to be derived from the design of educational reforms and to minimize the political cost of implementing them.

Furthermore, due to the ideological manner in which it is characterized and because of its relative autonomy, the state is often perceived as completely autonomous and neutral. In this view, Young (1980) has observed that the state can elicit social opinion (which emanates from the residue of history, tradition, and established beliefs) and mould mass opinion (which is mediated by personal versus. group interests) while seeming to mobilize public opinion (i.e., that which reflects genuine human interests and is derived from general population participative decision making). This debate is extended by Poulantzas (1975) argument that: “by means of a whole complex functioning of the ideological, the capitalist state systematically conceals its political class character This state presents itself as the incarnation of the popular will of the people/ nation”. Therefore, analysing educational reform rhetoric as ideological work can be a fruitful approach to understanding what is taking place. The embedding issue is that the reform rhetoric may not be indeed concretely connected with efforts to change anything fundamentally about schools. The object may be to define what the problems and possible solutions are, even if no sustained change effort is launched.

5. A confused panorama of masked, hidden and flowery rhetoric of educational reforms

In this paper, we have argued that a fundamental tension has always existed within the Ghanaian society between two competing perspectives on educational reform policy. These perspectives view education in terms of its multiple purposes, as an instrument of economic development but also as a vehicle for promoting democratic equality and social mobility. This tension is accurately and insightfully described in Papadopoulos's work that viewed education in social-democratic terms as concerned with the development of democratic citizens, who could participate in their communities in a critically informed manner (Papadopoulos, 2011). In Ghana, education is regarded as a public good, implying that maximum benefit can only be derived from education if every member of the society is educated to realize their full potential. The primary purpose of education in the country then is the creation of productive citizens. This means that the economic outcomes of education are recognized, but located within the framework of the broader role of education in the development of a socially cohesive democratic society.

We have argued again that in recent decades this perspective on education has gradually given way to an alternative perspective that emphasizes instead, the role of education in ensuring economic efficiency within an increasingly globalized market. This requires education to play an instrumental role in producing workers able to contribute to the economic productivity of nations and corporations alike. Its focus is not only on the needs and development of individuals but also, on the efficiency with which the educational system operates. The emphasis is on the education system's capacity to make an adequate return on investment, assessed in terms of its contribution in producing workers with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are relevant to increasing productivity. In this way, education is viewed both as a public and a private good. Public because it contributes to the economic development of a community; and private because it serves individual interests within a competitive labour market. We have suggested that the ascendancy of this perspective to education in Ghana is associated with a new discourse of globalization and its implications for educational reform policy, and

especially exacerbated by political regime change. New regimes justify this shift in its orientation to educational policy work in terms of the need to reflect the changing global realities. In this view, globalization has been reified and treated as if it is inevitable.

In resolving the various debates presented in the paper in lieu of conclusion, these normative discussions have led us to examine the global ideology that both informs international development agencies' and donors' policy work in education and have become central to multilateral relations of Ghana. This global education ideology has operated within a broader context of the changes in the ways in which nation-states now relate to and work with each other. These point to the traditional conception of the nation-state as a fundamental unit of world order, and a unitary phenomenon that is characterized by its relative homogeneity with a set of singular purposes, but which has been replaced by a fragmented policy arena, permeated by transnational networks as well as domestic agencies and forces. The point of this concluding note is that the contemporary era in Ghana has witnessed layers of governance spreading within and across political boundaries and transforming the state's sovereignty into a shared exercise of power, where the emergence of these new patterns of political interconnectedness has declined the scope of policy choices available to Ghana's government, and the effectiveness of many traditional policy instruments have also tended to recede. The point of this discourse is that Ghana's multilateral cooperation regime does not occur in a politically neutral space, but in a space that is characterized by asymmetrical relations of power. And the flows of information and policy ideas are skewed towards the most powerful countries and their political interests. And as facilitators of information flows and policy dialogue, international organizations have also acquired greater power and influence than ever before. Hence, through the construction of agenda for policy dialogue, these organisations display a marked preference for certain policy priorities. This preference is what get carried over into multilateral work, and this is much evident in the ways in which the agencies promote new social imaginary around the discourse of educational reform.

This narrative can be understood in both national and world systems terms. Hence, the paper has sought to contrast national- and world-system-level explanations of educational reform. We have argued that it is difficult to adequately understand the workings in nation-states towards educational reforms without taking into consideration developments in the world system. This is true for Ghana as a periphery nation-state that exist and functions in a stratified world system which has ramifications for capitalism, and which has had a moderating influence on Ghana's educational reforms. The lesson drawn from this paper is that, an examination of educational reform efforts in any country or region, also need to investigate how global structures and ideologies constrain and enable transactions concerning education from individuals and groups, especially within the context of political regime change. This exigency will require the analyst to focus on the dynamics of the world economy, the processes and the content of production and dissemination of ideas in the world cultural system, and the involvement of multinational corporations, corporate foundations, international organizations, bilateral agencies, and universities. Factoring the world-system level in the educational reform analysis does not in any way suggest that the national-level cultural, economic, and political dynamics should be discounted. Indeed, the paper concurs with Simmons (1983a) that educational reform is shaped by a complex interaction among local, national, and international factors, and with Wirt and Harman (1986) that national qualities operate like a prism, refracting and adapting (global) influences, without blocking all of them. Hence, in our discourse we have placed emphasis on the state and the way it functions within a plethora of contexts embedded in national and world systems, and we have shown the existence of transactions among groups inside and outside the educational system which Archer (1987) has discussed as political manipulation, external transaction, and internal initiation.

These efforts are usually translated into both resistance and accommodation of the educational reforms even when the reform is initiated by external forces, and conceived as the demands of economic elites for greater fit between education and the economy by the educational system. This makes the school system an active force rather than a passive mirror. This view points to an important niche for this paper which enjoins analysts not to conceive nation-states, educators, individuals and groups who constitute and are constituted by the cultural, economic, and political dynamics of education as completely autonomous of world-system dynamics, but rather as clarifying their relative autonomy. Thus, the point of including the world-system and national-level structural and ideological contexts of educational systems in our analysis is first to identify how human activity involving educational reform rhetoric and action is determined. And second, to emphasize that the dynamics in the world system constitute an important part of the terrain on which groups struggle over educational policy reforms especially in the areas of organization, goals, curriculum, pedagogy, and financing.

Consequently, this paper conceives the rhetoric and action of 'educational reform' resulting from regime change as a discourse to be deconstructed. This is not to posit an idealist notion of educational reform. Rather, through a more dialectical approach, the paper provides space for individuals and groups both verbally and through their practices to express themselves within discourse and make choices, while at the same time seeing the forms and content of educational reform discourse even in the context of regime change as constrained and enabled at the same time by national-level and world-system-level structures and ideology. Indeed, the

discussions made so far obtains in a foreign country where things are done differently, but the arguments advanced so far calls for a paradigm shift in political formations meant for engineering educational reforms in the 21st century.

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