

FROM GLOBAL PROJECTS TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE:
THE LOCALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
IN POST-COMMUNIST ALBANIA

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by
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This dissertation examines the role of key educational actors in Albanian educational reform and democratization following the fall of the communist dictatorship. In the post-communist period, Albanian policy makers increasingly adopted models of education for a democratic, market-based, global knowledge society. Yet despite a seeming convergence of national and international educational aims, such interventions resulted in a wide variation of results on the ground. My dissertation analyzes these gaps between policy and practice. For a total of 32 months during 2003-2009, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Albania, one of the poorest countries of Europe. In a vertical case study, I investigated the changing roles and identities, sources of knowledge, and professional practice of international experts, national education leaders, and teachers as they developed and implemented educational projects for democratic citizenship and the global knowledge economy. I found that although national policy-makers aimed to modernize the Albanian education system by infusing international models into national policies, teachers strategically interpreted and adapted these foreign models to reflect their experience with the political context of schools, their pedagogical and subject knowledge, and their familiar forms of teaching practice. The resulting process of hybrid localization and enactment has significant implications for the outcomes of educational reform in Albania and other democratizing countries. With a more nuanced understanding of the roles, identities, knowledge, and practice of local actors, we can begin to explain why global educational models often fail to be reproduced in particular venues and are instead selectively, strategically, and creatively localized.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Meg P. Gardinier has over 10 years of professional experience working in the field of international educational development. She holds an Ed.M. in International Educational Development from Teachers College, Columbia University and, with this dissertation, a Ph.D. in Education from Cornell University. Her areas of academic expertise include Comparative and International Education; International Education Policy and Reform; Globalization and Localization; Democratic Citizenship, Peace, and Human Rights Education; and Qualitative Research Methods. Meg has received numerous fellowships and awards including the Spencer Dissertation Fellowship, IREX IARO, Boren and Fulbright Fellowships, a Title VIII Research Scholarship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and a Peace Studies Fellowship from Cornell University. She is the co-author with Elizabeth A. Worden of “The semblance of progress amidst the absence of change: Educating for an imagined Europe in Moldova and Albania” published in 2011 in Silova, I. (Ed.). Post-socialism is not dead: (Re)reading the global in comparative education. Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing. Meg is passionate about teaching and learning, equity and social justice, gender equality, intercultural understanding, and peace, and believes that education can be a positive force for change in all of these areas.

To Elton, my parents, and my sons, Daniel and Luke.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| AEDP | Albanian Educational Development Project |
| AFCR | Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes |
| CDE | Center for Democratic Education (Albania) |
| CIE | Comparative and International Education |
| CoE | Council of Europe |
| DAR | Regional Educational Directorate (Albania) |
| DCE | Democratic Citizenship Education |
| DSDC | Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination |
| EEEP | Educational Excellence and Equity Project |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EU | European Union |
| HRE | Human Rights Education |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| IO | International Organization |
| IR | International Relations |
| IREX | International Research & Exchanges Board |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MOES | Ministry of Education and Science (Albanian) |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NSDI | National Strategy for Development and Integration |
| NSSD | National Strategy for Social and Economic Development |

| | |
|--------|--|
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | UN Children's Fund |
| US | United States |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| WB | World Bank |

Chapter I

Introduction, Review of Literature, and Theoretical Frame

In the former communist countries of Southeast Europe, democratization has introduced a complex array of social and political processes. Minimizing violent conflict, promoting economic growth and stability, and integrating with the European community are key goals for national and regional actors. Though education is an important component of these efforts, there is sparse research examining the role of educators in transforming these societies. This dissertation addresses many of these intersecting issues by examining how local teachers, specialists, and education policy-makers envision and enact democratic change in Albania.

Albania is a relatively small and homogeneous country of 3.2 million people in Southeastern Europe. Until 1991, Albania was one of the most isolated and economically disadvantaged countries of Europe. Albanians were subject to a brutal totalitarian regime for more than four decades, with the vast majority living in poor rural and mountainous communities isolated from the world. For decades, schools served as an instrument of Marxist indoctrination. Textbooks uncritically venerated the leader of the People's Democratic Party, Enver Hoxha. Teachers, portrayed as a source of guiding light for "the new socialist man" (Musai, 2005, p. 85), were often sent far from their hometowns to remote villages in order to propagate the educational ideology of the ruling Party.

With the end of communism, Albanian educators were cautiously hopeful. Policy makers looked to the West for economic assistance and guidance for democratic reform, as former adversaries were greeted with new respect. International donors and organizations such as the World Bank, UN agencies, the US government, and Soros Foundation arrived in Albania

bringing a plethora of foreign educational models for modernization and democratization. Yet in the absence of systematic documentation on these projects, it is difficult to assess their impact on the Albanian educational system. Thus while a variety of global educational models flowed into Albania throughout the two decades following the collapse of the communist regime, the extent to which these models have been adopted at the policy level, applied to curriculum and teacher training reforms, and integrated into school life remains unspecified.

This chapter sets the stage for the investigation of these issues. First, I briefly highlight some of the significant changes in the social and political landscape in post-communist Albania and identify this dissertation's central research questions concerning educational localization. I then discuss my central thesis. Lending theoretical and empirical support to this thesis, I review literature from the fields of Comparative and International Education, Educational Anthropology, and International Relations. Next, I introduce various conceptualizations of localization as well as my theoretical framework for this research. The chapter concludes with a brief summary and overview of the dissertation as a whole.

Albanian Post-Communist Educational Landscape

As early as 1992, the communist ideological and militarized content of school curricula in Albania was examined and those subjects were removed.¹ Academics and educational professionals then began to develop more de-politicized curricula and textbooks. However,

¹ In my research in Albania, I have not come across any official documentation on this process, though admittedly, it is not the focus of my research. For more information, Thomas (1969) provides a very thorough overview of Communist education in Albania, and Musai (2005) provides a brief first-hand account of his experience teaching under Communism and after the end of the regime. In an unpublished paper (Perez, 2003), a colleague addressed the history textbook revision process in Albania, noting that despite official rhetoric to the contrary, the process was highly politicized and contentious.

schools in Albania remained largely politicized throughout the decade. According to a 2003 stocktaking report:

Albania's experience clearly testifies that the destruction of a totalitarian regime does not *automatically* lead to an open civil society. Demolishing totalitarianism does not necessarily mean that the way to democracy is open, and modern open concepts of citizenship may remain weak in the face of continuing – and sometimes even strengthened – political partisanship. (Dhamo, 2003, p. 6)

By 1995, the national government updated the laws governing the educational system and introduced the subject of human rights in pre-university education. According to a recent document, the World Bank, European Union, and Soros Foundation provided 30 million USD primarily for the reconstruction of schools –many of which were dilapidated from years of neglect and damaged during the last days of the dictatorship– as well as for building the capacity of educators (CDE, 2006). These initiatives continued; however in 1997 and 1998, school reconstruction and reform experienced a setback due to civil unrest and violence resulting from the collapse of government endorsed pyramid schemes² in Albania. During this period, armed local gangs vandalized many schools. Some schools, however, remained intact, as noted by Rozafa, a middle school teacher in the capital city:

Even though before 1996, teaching methods had improved with the coming of Democracy, during 1997 when there was war here, Albania went through a really big shock. This shock directly influenced the students' minds. The students started to think about their rights, but not about their responsibilities, and this made it very hard for us for a few years - especially between 1997 and 2000. Since 2000, the schools started to consolidate again. I have been

² Similar to Ponzi schemes, the pyramid schemes in Albania were fabricated investment opportunities in which approximately two-thirds of the population invested their meager savings during the early years of the development of Albania's market economy when there was minimal oversight or financial regulation. In these schemes, a company or firm promised investors high returns quickly, but the returns were paid directly from future investments rather than from a return on the company's real assets (most of the companies did not possess any real assets). Unfamiliar with the workings of a market economy, many Albanians sold their homes and livestock in order to invest with the promise of making money fast. But during 1996 and early 1997, when they sought payment for their full investments, the schemes collapsed and wiped out the savings of approximately half the population. This economic collapse, along with several other factors, gave rise to armed riots and rampant insecurity for several months.

teaching at this school since January 2000. Initially I found a very disturbing environment, but through hard work and teamwork with other teachers, we managed to teach students new beliefs about school and learning, because they can't do anything beautiful if they aren't educated. Even though during the time of war, I was a teacher in a very harsh community, they should be thanked because they did not destroy the schools. Really, nothing happened to the schools, and it was difficult to find something damaged. (Personal interview, 2009)

Alongside school reconstruction projects, educational policy reform efforts accelerated in the new millennium. In 2001, Albania adopted the United Nations framework of the Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction and education and health sector reform. The focus of education policy reform during the next few years reflected international norms of providing “quality education”³ and “building capacity” in the education system. From 2003-2006, the Albanian Ministry of Education drafted reforms that helped Albania resemble other European systems of education. Since the late 1990s, political integration with Western Europe has served as one of the key motivating factors for policy reform in Albania. According to one local professional, the education sector should be the first to be integrated with such standards; indeed, schools should “live 20 years ahead” of the rest of society, providing a “beacon” for broader social and democratic change (Spiro, personal interview, 2007).⁴

With an emphasis on decentralization, the national government’s Pedagogical Research Institute was divided into three separate units, one focusing on curricula and standards, another responsible for teacher training and qualification, and a third managing assessment and

³ The concept of “quality education” is heavily laden with normative implications. Regarding “quality education” in Albania, Dharmo (2003) points out: “The over-use of the term ‘quality in education’ in daily rhetoric is not sufficient reason to believe that it has a shared meaning among users. In the discussions we organized, more often than not the shallowness of the understanding of this concept was very evident” (p. 8). For information on the dominant international framework for “quality education” see the UNICEF website: http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_quality.html.

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evaluation. Educational regions and directorates were also re-organized throughout the country. In 2004, the government approved a National Strategy of Education and the levels and years of schooling were restructured according to the practices of other member countries of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (CDE, 2006).

In 2006, the Albanian government adopted the World Bank's "Educational Excellence and Equity Project" at a value of USD 75 million, with the World Bank, two other international lenders, and the Albanian Government providing the funding. This program aimed to assist with the implementation of the National Strategy of Education, to improve the quality of learning and the conditions of schools, and to reduce student attrition (CDE, 2006). This project ran from October 2006–December 2010.

Despite the importance of these new policy frameworks, researchers contend that policy "talk" does not always equal policy "action" (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, p. 9). During the early stages of this research, I found that although the Albanian government aimed for the UN-derived EFA (Education for All) and MDG (Millennium Development Goals) targets such as giving all children a quality basic education; achieving a 90% enrollment rate for secondary education; and increasing educational access for the poor, the systematic implementation of these reforms has been inconsistent. After two decades of intended reform, project results were often temporary and unsustainable, and the legacy of authoritarianism was still salient in many schools. Centralized and opaque decision-making, arbitrary and authoritative forms of evaluation, and teacher-centered classrooms were persistent reminders of the former era.

The gaps between the design, implementation, and local adoption of new educational ideas and practices were also significant. In 2003, as a participant observer with an international

peace and disarmament education project in the towns of Gramsh and Shkodra, I observed the ways in which teachers and school principals grappled with the foreign pedagogical approach of *student-centered learning* – a core component of peace and human rights education. Initially, although the teachers enjoyed the trainings and seemed to embrace the new educational models, their role-playing of teaching strategies continued to demonstrate the traditional paradigm of the teacher as the exclusive authority figure to the obedient students. Several months into the project, however, these teachers began to relinquish some of this authority and allow more student voice. Students began to create classroom projects that reflected their own interests; they demonstrated creativity and critical thinking in designing these projects. Teachers too were asked to create curricular units that incorporated some new themes and approaches of peace education. Their modules were eventually published in a curriculum handbook that was adopted by the national Pedagogical Research Institute. Despite these positive changes, the teachers continued to struggle throughout the project with the hierarchical structure of their schools, the authoritarian policies –and in one case corruption– of their school directors, the skepticism of parents, and the absence of adequate resources. Negotiating between concrete local constraints and abstract project goals thus proved a daily challenge for these educators.

The contested meaning and significance of “expertise” was another aspect of the local response to ongoing international interventions in Albanian education. Local educational actors invested faith in foreign expertise, yet many also recognize a paradox because foreigners are sometimes perceived as the “damn internationals” – so-called experts who know very little about Albania and figuratively parachute in to the rescue (Spiro, 2006). While some educational projects, such as those organized by the Soros Foundation, aimed to incorporate local knowledge and aspirations into new educational programming, other projects introduced by international

organizations, foreign non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments relied on an implicitly top-down model for change. Project goals and frameworks were developed in central offices in Tirana (the Albanian capital) or abroad and then implemented in local communities with little input from the project recipients. In these cases, foreign expertise and “best practices” served as the guiding principles for the design and implementation of local educational initiatives. Yet one must investigate how key local actors made sense of these foreign models, how foreign and local forms of expertise were negotiated, and ultimately *whether* and *how* these models for reform were translated into local practice in particular school contexts. My doctoral research investigates these questions.

Dissertation Research Questions and Thesis

This dissertation examines how global educational models, specifically those promoting democratic citizenship and human rights education (DCE/HRE), are being localized in Albania. Localization can be described as the process through which key local actors such as teachers, trainers, and policy makers interpret, adapt, implement, and contest foreign models. Through an ethnographic approach involving in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis, I examined democracy-oriented educational projects and policies being implemented in urban center and periphery school contexts. Specifically, I investigated the following questions at different institutional levels:

- 1. How do educational actors make sense of their role(s) concerning policies for democratic citizenship and human rights education?*

2. *What are the sources of knowledge (e.g. experiential, technical, cultural) that educational actors use to interpret and adapt democratic citizenship and human rights education to their institutional contexts?*
3. *How do educational actors translate their knowledge of democratic citizenship and human rights education into their everyday practice?*

Through an intensive exploration of these questions, I aim to better specify and understand how foreign expertise and local knowledge practices interact during the implementation of projects and policies aimed at reform of the Albanian educational system. By analyzing how different values, cultural perspectives, approaches to knowledge, and expectations of one's role in the system get negotiated, this project contributes a more thorough understanding of educational localization and its significance in the context of democratization.

Through the vertical case study design described in Chapter II, I examined multiple levels of the educational system with a focus on key actors and institutions. I employed a comparative lens as I explored the linkages and disconnections among various educational spaces and contexts in Albania. Within my broad research questions, I also explored the following: (1) How do urban center and periphery school teachers differ in terms of their interpretation, adaptation and implementation of programs for DCE/HRE? (2) How does the organizational platform (such as an international organization vs. a locally based non-governmental organization) of the educational project affect localization? and (3) How do educational actors occupying different institutional structures and positions negotiate similar policies of DCE/HRE? These questions help to illuminate important dimensions of the localization process.

The literature suggests that with more resources and increased exposure to international norms, urban center teachers may be more likely to adopt programs with little adaptation or contestation (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Alternatively, with fewer resources, greater distance from the cosmopolitan urban center, and generally more immediate local needs, periphery school teachers are more likely to significantly adapt and localize borrowed educational models (Skendaj, 2009). Thus, I envision the localization of democratic citizenship and human rights educational models occurring along a continuum from intact adoption with no local adaptation to negative adoption in which a model would be completely transformed or subverted according to the local interests, needs, or conditions. I discuss this theoretical frame in more depth later in this chapter.

By looking at the role and identity of key actors, their various forms of knowledge, and their everyday practices, we can better understand how borrowed educational models aimed at modernization and democratization are interpreted, re-configured, adapted and selectively applied or resisted by Albanian educators. I argue that while national policy documents largely reflect a goal to reproduce international norms, particularly European and neo-liberal frameworks for educational reform and standardization, local actors nonetheless localize these models to better fit with existing educational structures and practices. Localization thus involves a complex process involving appropriation, adaptation, improvisation, resistance, infusion, and enactment by situated actors. Analyzing these various processes and the educational contexts that frame them helps us to understand the particularities and inconsistencies of world cultural models associated with globalization. In other words, by focusing on the roles, identities, forms of knowledge, and practices of local actors, we can better understand why global educational

models often fail to be reproduced in local venues but are instead selectively, strategically, and creatively reconstituted.

Review of Literature: Questions of Globalization, Localization, and Educational Policy Transfer⁵

In the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE), “A central question ... is whether educational systems are abandoning their distinct cultural conceptions of ‘good education’ or ‘effective schooling’ and are gradually converging toward an international model of education” (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006, p. 2). This debate often reduces to fundamental questions of structure vs. agency. On the one hand, researchers favoring a structural argument claim that international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and international organizations (IOs) are carriers of world cultural models that constitute the identities of states and local actors. They frame these processes according to “world-polity institutionalist theory” which takes as a starting point “the universalistic (transnational, global) level of cultural and organizational formation that operates as a constitutive and directive environment for states, business enterprises, groups, and individuals” (Boli and Thomas, 1999, p. 3). World culture as such has grown out of “Western Christendom” and has been spreading with the growth and expansion of international institutions since World War II. Worldwide models “define and legitimate agendas for local action, shaping the structures and policies of nation-states and other national and local

⁵ The pioneering work of Dr. Gita Steiner-Khamsi in this area has been extremely influential in framing my dissertation. In her edited volume on *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, Steiner-Khamsi (2004) brings together authors who examine the “politics of educational borrowing and lending (‘why’), the process (‘how’), and the agents of transfer (‘who’)” (p. 2). Throughout this dissertation, the concept of “educational transfer” refers broadly to processes of international and transnational educational policy borrowing and lending which typically involve international organizations, states, non-governmental organizations (international and local), and local non-state actors.

actors in virtually all of the domains of rationalized social life – business, politics, education,” etc. through the development of “structural isomorphism”⁶ among states (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997, p. 145). From this perspective, states import and adopt identical educational models and policies in order to gain legitimacy and status in the world polity.

From this view, formal schooling is seen as a fundamental aspect of national development, an institution through which modern citizens are formed, and a key component of world culture as a rationalizing system of citizenship, rights, and entitlements (Ramirez & Rubinson, 1979). Furthermore, standardized curricular models are predicted to increasingly replace local cultural and indigenous educational traditions and programs as states gravitate towards the global cultural model of a uniform modern education system (Benavot, Cha, Kamens, Meyer, & Wong, 1992, p. 59). Education policies embody the principles, norms, values and ideologies that originate in the wider world polity; thus, the “prescriptive educational norms” of international organizations (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, or the World Bank) become institutionalized within national systems as states ratify and adopt IO policies and rely on their expertise and resources to guide national development efforts (McNeely, 1995; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). From this perspective, newly independent and democratizing states are particularly reliant on the importation of such external models as they seek to establish and strengthen the legitimacy of their new identity in the world polity (McNeely, 1995).

When it comes to analyzing the implementation of borrowed educational policies, where localization is most likely to occur, proponents of world culture theory have a dearth of empirical data. Instead, they rely on the theoretical explanation of “loose coupling/decoupling” which is

⁶ Meyer, et. al. (1997) define structuration as “the formation and spread of explicit, rationalized, differentiated organizational forms” (p. 156) while isomorphism refers to the finding among world culture researchers that countries with widely different economies and cultural traditions have adopted and institutionalized similar political units and standardized forms such as educational systems, school curriculum, and sets of rights (pp. 152-153).

“endemic” to the spread of world culture because states cannot possibly imitate and implement idealized rational models in their entirety (Meyer et. al., 1997, p. 154; Ramirez, 2003).

Disconnects between global models and empirical reality are thus predictable. Interestingly, these researchers also argue that “diffusion processes work at several levels and through a variety of linkages, yielding incoherence”; thus, contrary to the criticism of Finnemore (1996) and others, world culture theory allows for, explains, and even necessitates contradictions between policy and practice (Meyer et. al., 1997, p. 154). In fact, they argue, sometimes policies that are adopted are never intended to be implemented at all, but rather states endorse them simply to indicate their affiliation with the legitimated goals of world society. The semblance of “progress” in national educational planning may be the exclusive intention behind a state’s utilization of world cultural models (Meyer et. al., 1997; Gardinier and Worden, 2011).

For some institutionalist researchers, however, this abstract structural theory of world culture is “only a first step” in exploring issues of policy diffusion (McNeely, 1995, p. 505). McNeely and others argue that because international organizations, foreign experts, and transnational actors assist in the implementation of borrowed educational policies, advocates and “moral entrepreneurs” as well as state actors play an important role in the spread of world cultural models and their national institutionalization (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; McNeely, 1995; Mundy and Murphy, 2001;).

On the other side of this theoretical debate, agency-focused researchers in Comparative and International Education (CIE) reject the notion of global diffusion as homogenization and instead look “closer-to-the-ground” to better understand “the complex reasons for which some people adopt and others resist certain processes” (Bartlett, 2003, p. 186). These researchers find that teachers, in particular, are the key agents that determine how transferred educational policies

and programs are localized. For example, Bjork (2003), Schweisfurth (2002), Welmond (2002), and Johnson, Monk, and Hodges (2000) focus on the role of teachers as conduits and mediators of educational change in Indonesia, the Gambia, the Republic of Benin, and South Africa, respectively.

The ethnographic work of Chris Bjork exemplifies this theoretical approach. In his qualitative study on local responses to the Local Content Curriculum (LCC) program of the Indonesian government, Bjork (2003; 2005) discusses how teachers perform a dual role of verbally adhering to the new program while concurrently maintaining their traditional practice. Bjork (2003) links the Indonesian Ministry of Education (MOEC) LCC policy with the prevailing trends of international lending agencies to decentralize educational systems worldwide in efforts to maximize efficiency through the re-distribution of power. However, due to Indonesia's legacy of tightly controlled centralized authority, teachers, who were traditionally treated as civil servants and expected to heed authority rather than develop and implement their own innovations in the classroom, were charged with changing curriculum and pedagogy to make school more relevant for their students. Bjork (2003) points to how teachers' expectations of their role involved loyalty, work performance, responsibility, obedience, and honesty, *not* innovation, creativity, and independence (p. 204). Thus traditional role expectations served as impediments to the prescribed roles embedded in the national policy reform. He argues that Indonesian teachers were part of a "civil service culture" that "promotes values and behaviors that are fundamentally at odds with the new role of the teacher that the MOEC is currently promoting" (Bjork, 2003, p. 205). For Bjork, this situation demonstrates "the danger of applying Western models of teacher management to school systems whose development has been shaped by unique values and conditions and expecting similar results" (2003, p. 206).

Another interesting finding in his study is that despite the local disconnect with the government's policy, there was great enthusiasm for the LCC program among Ministry officials in Jakarta, many of whom were educated abroad and maintained transnational links. Yet these same officials, despite a rhetorical desire for decentralized authority, maintained authoritarian control during teacher trainings and workshops. Bjork (2003) concludes that the contradictions in policy spanned the entire system from the local schools to the national government. The incongruity between educational theory ("produced almost entirely by Western academics and conducted in settings that share few commonalities with Indonesian institutions") and actual practice in Indonesia were present throughout the various levels of the educational system (Bjork, 2003, p. 211-212). Local factors such as "deeply rooted ideas about authority and hierarchy, failed experiments with democratic rule in the past, economic uncertainty, and a history of emphasizing the schools' obligation to buttress national integration" significantly influenced the role that teachers played in their selective and resistant localization of educational policies in Indonesia (Bjork, 2003, p. 216). Thus, although he does not use the term localization in his research, Bjork's extensive study is nonetheless extremely relevant to my current investigation in Albania.

For Welmond (2002) and Johnson et. al. (2000), studies focusing on local teacher identities in the Republic of Benin and South Africa, respectively, further illuminate the contrasts and contradictions between local practice and imported Northern/Western educational models. Welmond (2002) contrasts the role of teachers in Benin with the new expectations introduced by Western "edlib policy" or finance-driven reforms advocated by international agencies such as the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the French Development Agency (p. 39). He asserts that "if policy makers and development agencies view

teachers as ‘budgetivores’ or overpaid, underperforming workers, while teachers see themselves as underappreciated contributors to the future of their country,” policy failure is imminent (Welmond, 2002, p. 38). He concludes that a better understanding of political context and historical circumstances is necessary in the development of local educational policy. From a critical perspective, he argues that “any policy framework that does not include a coherent strategy for addressing teacher valorization or professionalization will not lead to the intended results,” but may instead produce “unintended consequences” (Welmond, 2002, p. 65).

Comparative education studies of the implementation of borrowed educational models emphasize teachers, key political actors, and local context as significant factors that mediate “policy talk” and policy implementation (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006; Phillips and Ochs, 2003). They cite domestic politics and contestation along with the perception of local needs and conditions as driving forces in educational policy borrowing. For example, education policies are often imported either to undermine the policy of a political opponent through differentiation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2005; Ball, 1998; Spreen, 2004) or to gain local political legitimation when other domestic models have failed (Steiner-Khamsi and Quist, 2000; Halpin and Troyna, 1995). Some argue that international models are imported for the sake of expediency and a lack of local expertise, as this excerpt from a Thai official suggests:

Adopting a global reform paradigm is a good choice ... because it silences domestic differences, pleases funding agencies, and presents convenient packages of ready-made reform programs. It is also easier to convince the public about the benefits of a reform proposal that has already worked well in a developed country than to build public support for a completely new indigenous reform program. (Bowornwathana, 2000, p. 398 quoted in Jungck & Kajornsinn, 2003, p. 29)

However, some researchers have found that borrowing a foreign policy *in name* is not the same as borrowing *in substance*. The importation of foreign policies may represent more symbolic, politically motivated, short term, self-interested attempts to gain power, avoid

controversy (Halpin and Troyna, 1995), or wave a “flag of convenience” that resonates with donors (Lynch 1998, p. 9 quoted in Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006, p. 14).

From this more locally focused perspective, evidence suggests that borrowed educational policies are often partially adapted and implemented (hybridized), ignored, rejected, or used variably to reinforce or replace existing policies (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006; Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Spreen, 2004; Welmond, 2002). As noted above, borrowed reform policies focusing on educational decentralization clashed with the “local wisdom” in Thailand (Jungck & Kajornsinsin, 2003) and the historical “culture of teaching” in Indonesia (Bjork, 2003). These clashes illuminated contradictions between policy and practice and provoked local resistance to policy implementation.

Another possible outcome of this selective borrowing and implementation is a kind of adaptation in which the foreign origins of borrowed models become increasingly camouflaged. In post-apartheid South Africa, for example, Spreen (2004) argues that as borrowed policies were increasingly appropriated, their international origins were dropped. This process speaks to what others have termed “indigenization” (Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), “Mongolization” (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2006), “glocalization” (Jungck & Kajornsinsin, 2003), and “creolization” (Ramirez, 2003). Thus while CIE researchers may agree that policy borrowing is often motivated by a state’s desire to increase legitimacy and appease Western donors, a key distinction among the different sides of this theoretical debate is the argument that educational policy borrowing should be attributed primarily to the agency of local political actors rather than the structure of the international system. And while many researchers concur on at least the semblance of policy convergence among states, those taking a more local perspective

argue that a deeper contextual analysis of educational borrowing reveals very little actual convergence in policy implementation.

This rich body of literature in CIE provides fertile ground for my current investigation on the localization of democratic citizenship education in Albania. By substantiating the importance of local factors and actors as intermediary determinants in the implementation of borrowed global models, these studies provide a solid foundation for my work. Yet while these authors suggest similar processes of localization, the actual term is rarely used in the literature. One contribution of my research is thus to build on this literature, and these important debates within the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE), by introducing a more robust concept of localization in the study of international educational transfer.

International relations literature on educational policy borrowing and implementation. In addition to CIE research, I draw on literature in the field of International Relations (IR) to help illuminate the concept of educational localization and better understand the process of norm diffusion through educational policy borrowing and lending. To make the theoretical journey from education to political science, I conceptualize educational models in terms of their normative political frameworks, or in short, “norms”. Constructivist researchers in IR define a norm as a “standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” or as a set of “principled ideas” about what is good and right for society (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). Norms can take different forms; for example, there are “regulative norms” which structure and constrain behavior, “constitutive norms, which create new actors, interests, or categories of action,” and “prescriptive norms” which serve as rules to be followed (Finnemore and Barnett, 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891; McNeely, 1995).

In terms of the normative aspects of educational models, there are many examples. Norms shape the *content* of educational material (e.g. human rights and democratic citizenship education), the *structuring* of educational systems (e.g. rationalization and decentralization), and the *standards* and *priorities* of national education policy (e.g. ensuring universal access to primary education – Education for All). Because norms and standards are so closely linked, norms play an important role in measuring educational outcomes through testing and evaluation. Yet another example of how international norms operate in the area of education is the prohibition of discrimination against minorities in schools. The *regulative aspect* of this norm generates school structures of enforcement while the *constitutive aspect* simultaneously constitutes actors' identities as “minority” or “marginalized”. The *prescriptive aspect* of this norm comes from the IOs and INGOs that promote the protection of minorities in education as well as tie their aid money to the protection of such rights (McNeely, 1995).

As argued by many constructivist IR scholars, international organizations are primary carriers of international norms; IOs are the “norm-makers” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Checkel, 1999; Finnemore, 1993; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). For many of these international organizations and international NGOs -- including UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Save the Children, Oxfam, and Amnesty International -- educational mandates determine a large portion of their work. Thus, IR research that addresses the role of IOs in norm diffusion has direct relevance to educational research, and, I argue, vice versa.

International organizations are also an important source of authority and expertise, both of which make them powerful by enabling them to “use discursive and institutional resources to induce others to defer to their judgment” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, p. 29). From this

perspective, IOs occupy a position that allows them to be both “in authority” to determine and dictate suggested forms of action to address particular kinds of problems (often those defined by their own selective analysis), and “an authority” based on their knowledge and “expertise demonstrated by credentials, education, training, and experience” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, p. 25). Though seemingly distinct, these two forms of authority are often conflated in the work of IOs. Frequently, “IO staff are aware that their authority is based on being perceived as both in and an authority, and they can be expected to present themselves as an expert by virtue of the fact that they occupy the position” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, p. 26). Thus, in the exercise of power through the mechanism of dispensing expertise and authority –which in themselves often appear to be depoliticized and impartial– IOs are able to define and diffuse the categories, meanings, and norms that influence how and why states act.

Because constructivist researchers in International Relations argue that states are social entities shaped by international politics and transnational action, the process of socialization is another key aspect of how international norms come to influence and constitute the identities of states and state actors. Along these lines, sociological institutionalists argue, “To the degree that states and state elites fashion a political self or identity in relation to the international community, the concept of socialization suggests that the cumulative effect of many countries in a region adopting new norms ‘may be analogous to ‘peer pressure’ among countries” (Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan, 1997 quoted in Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, pp. 902-903). This peer pressure works through different forms and to various degrees – from mere “role playing” to more in-depth “internalization” (Checkel, 2005, p. 804). As states become socialized, they increasingly accept and take for granted international norms, and their behavior begins to follow a “logic of appropriateness” rather than a more superficial “logic of consequences” (Checkel,

2005, p. 804). Thus, through socialization and identification with international norms, states and state actors “learn their role” in the international community (Checkel, 2005, p. 804).

Based on these arguments, states can be seen to borrow foreign educational models that embody international norms in order to gain legitimacy, to fit in with other states (particularly more influential or hegemonic⁷ states), to gain the support of the IOs advocating such policy models, or because state actors have been socialized to believe that such policies are the best option for their countries. States may also adopt foreign models out of a sense of wanting to belong to the international community or due to international persuasion or pressure to adopt such policies. Acharya (2004) further argues that states and local actors may actively seek foreign models to adopt not as a result of persuasion, but due to “local initiative” and intentional “cultural selection” (2004, p. 245). As I discuss in future chapters, in the case of Albania, IO educational models were adopted for many of these reasons and, in particular, because policy-makers felt both an internal and external (i.e. national and international as well as personal and political) push to “catch up with the West.”

On a more critical note, however, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue that norm diffusion is not an entirely peaceful and equitable process; they note, “international organizations like the UN and the World Bank, though not tailored to norm promotion, may have the advantage of resources and leverage over weak or developing states they seek to convert to their normative convictions” (p. 900). Additionally, in an earlier work, Finnemore highlights the ways in which the sociological institutionalists discussed earlier (promoting world cultural models) may actually “misspecify” the mechanisms of diffusion and fail to identify how the spread of world cultural models may lead to conflict, coercion, and/or violence rather than an uncontested and harmonious global consensus (1996, p. 343).

⁷ See Ikenberry and Kupchan (1990).

In terms of implementation of global models, variation in this process is recognized by IR as well as CIE theorists. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) find that, “international norms must always work their influence through the filter of domestic structures and domestic norms, which can produce important variations in compliance and interpretation of these norms” (p. 893). In other words, echoing “world culture” theorists, the imitation or importation of foreign norms is never expected to be absolute.

Important parallels thus exist between CIE research and this body of constructivist IR literature. Literature on norm diffusion, socialization, expertise, and localization, as I discuss below, provides an important theoretical framework that I seek to enrich and apply to the case of educational borrowing in Albania. While IR literature is focused primarily on state actors operating at national, international, and transnational levels, I hope to contribute more concrete and practical applications of these models at sub-national levels. Further, looking beyond political elites, I seek to understand the strategic role that other local actors such as teachers and mid-level education specialists play in processes of international diffusion and localization. Ultimately, I argue that by engaging with these IR frameworks, international educational researchers will be better equipped to understand and explain the local appropriation and adaptation of international norms as they are transferred through global educational models.

Educational anthropology and the cultural production of democratic actors. A third body of literature that informs my study in Albania comes from the field of Educational Anthropology. Studies focused on the production of identity in educational environments and the links between identities and democratic practice are particularly relevant. As I discuss below, critical ethnographies on the cultural production of democratic actors provide a useful theoretical

lens that I bring to the analysis and interpretation of data in my dissertation research.

This literature also provides a useful framework for working with the concept of culture. Following Kathleen Hall (1999), my research also seeks to examine “the interrelationships among processes of cultural production at different levels of the social scale (within global organizations, national policies, institutional contexts, and everyday practices) as well as across the parameters of time and space” by employing “multiple concepts of culture” (pp. 144-145). As implied here, the meaning of “culture” has been interrogated in current anthropological and ethnographic research, as I discuss further in Chapter II.

Critical educational ethnographers have responded to these theoretical shifts by reconceptualizing culture as a politicized *process* related to identity formation. For instance, Levinson and Holland (1996) assert: “emphasis has been placed on culture as a continual process of creating meaning in social and material contexts, replacing a conceptualization of culture as a static, unchanging body of knowledge ‘transmitted’ between generations” (p. 13). Their ethnographic work thus examines the cultural forms that shape and are shaped by educational agents in schools; they use the theoretical construct of “cultural production” to “portray and interpret the way people actively confront the ideological and material conditions presented by schooling” (Levinson and Holland, 1996, p. 14).

According to Levinson (2005a), “Around the world, schools have become key sites for the negotiation of local meanings with global institutional forms” (p. 335). School-based programs in democratic civic and citizenship education have become one of the primary sites for the creation of new political dispositions and identities and for the consolidation of meanings about ‘democracy.’ Levinson thus highlights concepts of identity, political “dispositions” and democracy as contested sites where meaning is produced.

Levinson examines multiple levels of educational policy and programming, from the school curriculum to the Ministry of Education policies that derive largely from foreign educational models. What Levinson (2005b) finds through this research is a set of processes embodying “important continuities and disjunctures” that illuminate how “global flows of ideas about democracy and citizenship” are locally appropriated in Mexico (p. 255). A key question that runs through Levinson’s research is how democracy becomes “‘glocalized’ in and through particular educational programs for democratic citizenship” (2005b, p. 255). Through a critical ethnographic lens, Levinson’s work points to the intersections of local and global educational issues concerning democracy and citizenship and thus contributes to a greater understanding of how these concepts are “multivalent and culturally situated” while at the same time “bound up with local identities and practices” (2005b, p. 283).

Kathleen Hall’s (2002) and Aurolyn Luykx’s (1999) ethnographic research also serves to illuminate the complex processes of identity formation and cultural production in schools. Hall analyzes the “processes of cultural translation, everyday acts of interpretation, negotiation, and situational performance through which, over time and across social settings, [Sikh youth] fashion identities, create lifestyles, and pursue imagined futures” in England (2002, p. 14). Like Levinson, she finds that the production of identities, including forms of national citizenship, is not uni-directional; instead, it is contextual, situated, and constantly re-made through everyday acts and performances. Similarly, Luykx (1999) explores the ideological aspects of indigenous teachers’ identity formation in Bolivia. She asserts that “our aim should be, not to remove ourselves from the process of interpellation, but to gain a critical perspective on it and on the subject positions involved; in other words, to ‘denaturalize’ them and penetrate the ideological

veil that obscures their origins in human-made structures of power” (Luykx, 1999, p. 127)⁸.

Following the critical theory of Gramsci, Althusser, and Mouffe, Luykx (1999) deconstructs the ideological and structural forces that serve to frame the meanings and identities claimed by indigenous educators in Bolivia. Through this process, she offers a critical perspective on the hegemonic aspects of subject formation through schooling while concurrently attributing agency to the teachers.

The work of Renato Rosaldo and Margaret Sutton also provides important insights into changing models and understandings of the formation of citizen-educational subjects. Rosaldo’s work focuses on de-mystifying the notion of the “universal citizen”. He asserts that when notions of citizenship assume a universal character in education, the complexity of identity and meaning that diverse student-subjects bring to the process is endangered. Counteracting this effect, Rosaldo’s work examines the many educational agents throughout the world involved in ongoing struggles “to be visible, to be heard, and to belong” in a multiplicity of modalities (1999, p. 260). Along similar lines, Sutton asserts that increased cultural diversity has complicated the meaning of citizenship and the ways in which education can (and should) be seen to contribute to the cultivation of citizenship and “the creation of national subjects” (Sutton, 2005, p. 100).

Thus, in developing a conceptual frame with which to investigate how key educational actors such as teachers localize foreign educational models of citizenship in Albania, I drew on constructs of agency and cultural production as discussed here. Educational actors become subjects through and in the localization process; they do so in the wider social and political context of Albanian democratization, thus constituting new notions of citizenship and identity as they work. Avoiding rigid configurations of a homogenous state and a unitary national citizen, I

⁸ The term interpellation draws on the work of French philosopher Louis Althusser who theorizes that individuals come to “recognize themselves as subjects *through* ideology, thus illustrating how subjects can be complicit in their own domination.” (University of Chicago keyword glossary)

explore how educational actors, through their role as agents of change and localization, become citizen-subjects in relation to new state policies and internationally crafted educational models.

Conceptualizing Localization

As noted earlier, researchers in the field of Comparative and International Education have yet to fully elaborate the concept of educational localization. Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker (2002, p. 69) refer to localization as “the decentralization of governance over public services such as public education;” however, this definition is too narrowly associated with economic factors and neglects other important dimensions of educational localization. Nancy Kendall (2007, p. 282) refers to the concepts of “globalization and localization” as part of the “lively debate” in Comparative and International Education between world cultural diffusion and hybridization, as discussed earlier. However, Kendall’s project did not involve a nuanced theoretical investigation or analysis of the processes associated with localization, per se. While some researchers build on wider interpretations of localizing processes such as “indigenization,” it is nonetheless clear that the field of Comparative and International Education currently lacks a robust concept of educational localization.

Thus, to explore this concept empirically, I borrow from International Relations literature in which Acharya (2004) offers a useful, though preliminary, conceptual framework for localization. Acharya defines localization as “the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices” (2004, p. 245). Based on his research in Southeast Asia, Acharya (2004) describes localization as “a long-term and

evolutionary assimilation of foreign ideas” that proceeds through various stages (p. 250).

Framing is a process of re-presenting an existing norm; it can serve to “make a global norm appear local” (Acharya, 2004, p. 244). Grafting is a process by which foreign “norm entrepreneurs” attempt to situate a foreign norm in a local context by associating it with local beliefs and values (Acharya, 2004, p. 244). Pruning refers to the process of modifying a foreign norm in order to increase its fit with existing beliefs and practices (Acharya, 2004, p. 246).

According to his model, localization is the process through which external ideas are adapted and reconstituted to fit with (and avoid contradicting) existing meanings associated with local norms and practices (Acharya, 2004, p. 251).

Table 1.1. Acharya’s Trajectory of Localization

| | |
|--|---|
| Pre-localization (resistance and contestation) | Local actors may offer resistance to new external norms because of doubts about the norms’ utility and applicability and fears that the norms might undermine existing beliefs and practices. The contestation may lead to localization if some local actors begin to view the external norms as having potential to contribute to the legitimacy and efficacy of existing institutions without undermining them. |
| Local initiative (entrepreneurship and framing) | Local actors (insider proponents) borrow and frame external norms in ways that establish their value to the local audience. |
| Adaptation (grafting and pruning) | External norms may be reconstructed to fit with local beliefs and practices even as local beliefs and practices may be adjusted in accordance with the external norm. Local actors may redefine the external norm, linking it with specific local norms and practices and modify the external norm, selecting only those elements that fit the preexisting normative structure. Borrowed norms <i>supplement</i> rather than <i>supplant</i> existing normative frameworks. |
| Amplification and 'universalization' | New instruments and practices are developed from the synthesized normative framework in which local influences remain highly visible. Existing norms receive wider external recognition through their newly established association with the foreign norm. |

Source: (Acharya, 2003, p. 251).

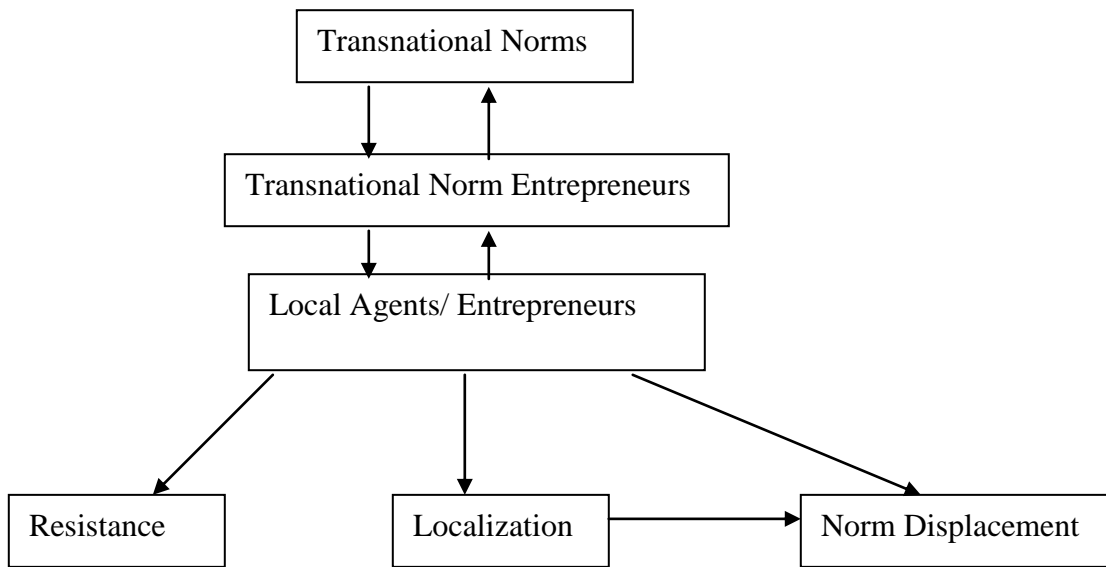
For Acharya, the factors that determine whether localization occurs include “the legitimacy and authority of key norm-takers, the strength of prior local norms, the credibility and prestige of local agents, indigenous cultural traits and traditions, and the scope for grafting and pruning presented by foreign norms” (2004, pp. 247-248). If localization does not occur, the cause is usually either “resistance,” which prevents a foreign norm from becoming institutionalized and adapted locally or “norm displacement,” which alters the local normative structure altogether (Acharya, 2004, p. 254). His model incorporates several important ideas about “how and why ideas travel and produce change across cultures and regions” such as his emphasis on the agency and initiative of local actors who selectively borrow and “prune” external norms in order to enhance their own and the norms’ local legitimacy and authority (Acharya, 2004, p. 246).

Local norm entrepreneurs have a commitment to localizing the new norms, increasing their local legitimacy, and building congruence with outside ideas. Importantly, for Acharya, it is the “norm-taker’s sense of identity that facilitates localization, especially if they possess a well developed sense of being unique in terms of their values and interactions” (2004, p. 248). The existence of prior local norms in a similar area and their local influence make localization more likely. Acharya argues, the stronger the local norm, the “greater the likelihood that new foreign norms will be localized rather than accepted wholesale” (2004, p. 248). Furthermore, when localization is voluntary and spearheaded by a local actor, the resulting change will be more enduring (Acharya, 2004, p. 251).

Another important aspect of Acharya’s model is the premise that localization “does not extinguish the cognitive prior of the norm-takers but leads to its mutual inflection with external norms” (2004, p. 251). Following this point, the importation of foreign norms and concepts is not

viewed as hegemonic or violent, but as mutually beneficial. Localization is distinguished from socialization in its bi-directionality; while socialization does not affect the socializing influence, localization occurs when “external ideas are simultaneously adapted to meet local practices” (Acharya, 2004, p. 252). In other words, localization is a process through which local and foreign norms enter into a “mutually constitutive” relationship even though the resulting practice will continue to be understood in terms of the local context. According to Acharya’s (2004) model, the outcomes of localization include various degrees of institutional change in which new tasks and instruments are created, institutional membership is expanded, and the means through which these new tasks are pursued expand to include new policy instruments, procedures, laws, and possibly the creation of new institutions. In sum, Acharya’s process of localization looks like this:

Figure 1.1. Acharya’s Localization Framework



Source: (Acharya, 2004, p. 254).

Acharya's model is a helpful starting point for my research on educational localization in Albania. Building on his framework and taking into account the various literatures discussed earlier, I expand the notion of educational localization to include three additional inter-related dimensions: *professional identity, knowledge, and practice*. The identities of key actors relates to their sense of their roles within various institutional structures, their power and authority in these contexts, and their relationships with other actors. This notion of identity primarily follows critical ethnographers such as Hall who conceptualize identity as "relational and reflexive, as *produced* through multiple forms and forces of discourse in relation to distinctive forms of power, and as *performed* as individuals negotiate multiple identifications across contexts of situated practice" (2004, p. 14). In this way, I use the concept of identity less to investigate what one *is* and instead to analyze what particular identities *do*. Next, as educational actors interpret and adapt borrowed models, they employ various forms of knowledge in the process. In particular, their experiential knowledge or *metis* (Scott, 1998), professional/technical knowledge and expertise, formal educational knowledge, and their cultural knowledge of "how things are done" all come into play in this process. I argue that these identities and forms of knowledge interact in ways that have direct implications for their educational practice.

Drawing on the socio-cultural work of Pierre Bourdieu, Sutton and Levinson (2001) insightfully refer to *practice* as "a way of accounting for the situated logic of activities across a wide array of contexts" (p. 3). Their sophisticated discussion of educational "policy as practice" merits an extended excerpt here:

Practice gets at the way individuals, and groups, engage in situated behaviors that are both constrained and enabled by existing structures, but which allow the person to exercise agency in the emerging situation. Qualitative sociocultural research into everyday practice thus promises to demystify the policy process and reconceive it in culturally reflexive terms. An emphasis on the purposeful practice of diverse social actors reinstates agency across all levels of the policy process,

making it possible to see policy not only as mandate but also as contested cultural resource. (Sutton & Levinson, 2001, p. 3)

Following this theoretical approach, I investigate how the everyday practice of teachers, specialists, and education policy-makers serves to transform international models of democratic citizenship and human rights education into locally meaningful activity. Practice, as such, is thus inexorably linked with actors' agency, their forms of knowledge, and their roles and identities in different institutional contexts. Each of these factors, in turn, contributes to the localization process.

Theorizing Localization

As discussed above, my research is framed by the debate in Comparative and International Education over world cultural diffusion versus the selective import and hybridization of global models in diverse national and local contexts. Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2006) attempt to remedy this theoretical division by differentiating levels of educational policy within a national context. In their case study of Mongolia, they find, "There is a convergence of educational reforms, but perhaps it is only at the level of brand names, that is, in the language of reform. Once a discourse is transplanted from one context to another and subsequently enacted in practice, it changes meaning" (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, pp. 7-8). My research indicates that this analysis applies to Albania as well. While there appears to be some international convergence of educational structures and policy "harmonization" at the national level, there is nonetheless wide variation in program and policy implementation, and more importantly, in the meanings that local actors bring to these imported educational models as they attempt to enact

them in their everyday practice.

The following table provides an overview of my tentative theoretical frame regarding educational localization in Albania. In selecting two different projects from different organizational platforms, one based in an international organization (IO), the other in a local non-governmental organization (NGO), I initially aimed to compare their different influences on the localization process. For example, due to its role as “norm-maker,” I initially posited that the UNICEF project would be localized less than the Albanian NGO project, especially in the urban center area where teachers and schools in general were much more cognizant of and agreeable toward international norms. Based on a theoretical sampling approach (Creswell, 2003; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) described in more detail in Chapter II, I intended the selection of particular school sites in urban center and periphery areas to illuminate how various kinds of communities engaged in localization (or not). Thus, I initially envisioned that educational localization would take place in degrees, along a continuum from full intact adoption (i.e. no localization/no variation) to negative adoption (i.e. complete transformation or subversion of the model; indigenization).

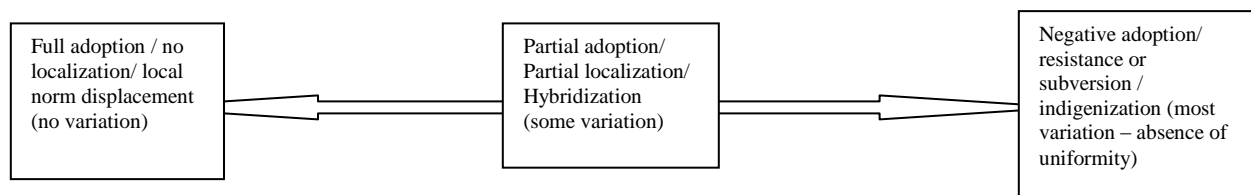


Figure 1.2. Proposed Continuum of Localization

The table below outlines my preliminary framework of outcomes for this research.

Table 1.2. Theoretical Frame: Expected Research Outcomes

| Sites | Urban Center | Periphery |
|--|---|---|
| UNICEF (IO) | With the most resources and most exposure to foreign models, as well as a more homogeneous student body, we expect higher teacher compliance and greater conformity in implementing the model without factoring in local conditions. This will lead to intact adoption and little adaptation/ localization. | With fewer resources and prior access to foreign ideas, teachers will improvise more in order to apply foreign models in their classes and make them more relevant to a diverse body of students. These factors will lead to surface adoption and hybrid enactment (partial localization). |
| Foundation – Local Albanian NGO | With greater resources, a higher level of exposure to foreign ideas, and more local origins of the project, these factors will lead to active adoption of the model with only partial localization and adaptation necessary. | With fewer resources, greater local need and challenges, and less exposure to foreign models, these factors will lead to possible teacher resistance, subversion or rejection of the model, or partial adoption with teachers localizing and inventing completely new applications of the former model. |

Despite the logic of these preliminary frameworks, my research in Albania resulted in a very different array of outcomes for localization. My revised framework is outlined in my conclusion and described below.

In brief, the difference between localization of the IO educational model vs. the NGO educational model was negligible because the IO and the NGO collaborated extensively in a range of ways, such as through shared logos on materials, the use of the same professionals to conduct teacher trainings and develop materials, and in some degrees, a shared perception that all non-school interventions were associated with “the state” regardless of whether they were run by a locally-based NGO or an international organization like UNICEF. In fact, what I found was that IOs, and particularly UNICEF, make it their strategy to work through local NGOs as

“implementing partners” while at the same time, local NGOs actively seek IO support, including financial backing, for their own projects. This kind of partnership works well for both organizations; local NGOs gain resources and legitimacy by partnering with IOs, while IOs hope to increase “local ownership” and capacity building by partnering with local NGOs. In particular, UNICEF staff created pilot projects which were implemented through local NGO partners, and eventually they hoped to either “take it to scale” in which case the national or local government would take over leadership or turn the project over to the NGO to keep the project alive. These organizational strategies made it extremely difficult to find projects that were originating exclusively from one organizational source.

My anticipated comparison was further complicated by the fact that in Albania, and most likely in other similar contexts, the scope of actors coming into schools to do various kinds of projects was so large that teachers and students understandably started to blur the distinctions between and among the various organizations. Similarly, what seemed to matter most was the length of the project’s presence in the school (because teachers had greater interest and stakes in projects that continued longer) and the nature and quality of the relationship between project staff and school staff.

Center and periphery schools, however, *did* differ in the process of localizing international models based on various factors such as the conditions present in the school, the knowledge and initiative of the particular teachers involved, and the political contexts of the individual schools and communities. I will discuss these issues in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Localization and Democratization

By incorporating Acharya's (2004) theoretical model of localization, I intend for my research to have a direct application to analyses of democratization. Below, I briefly introduce the main theoretical assertions this dissertation makes concerning the relationship between educational localization and democratization on three levels: *individual, institutional, and societal*.

At the level of the individual, I argue that by taking on the role of "norm entrepreneurs" in promoting foreign educational models of democratic citizenship and human rights, particular educational actors not only enhance their professional stature but they serve as role models for others. In the case of teachers, this means that they have a greater sense of agency and authority in their work, serving as potential role models for their students, fellow teachers, school directors, parents, and community members. As these teachers claim increasing agency as de facto leaders within their professional institutions, their identities shift in the direction of a participatory concept of democratic citizenship. For educational policy-makers, I posit that promoting foreign norms over time may result in an identity shift so that these individuals become increasingly identified with cosmopolitan and internationally espoused values and principles regarding democracy and human rights.

On a societal level, the contestation and resistance that often precedes the localization of foreign norms has the potential to open spaces for civic engagement, discourse, and debate. Imported educational models carry norms emphasizing critical thinking, active engagement in public debate, and other various approaches to analyzing and understanding relations of power and authority in society. To the extent that these models are considered in educational contexts, whether they are adopted or not, there may be increased openness and possibilities for

discussion, debate, dissent, and collective mobilization of various interest groups. In other words, educational change efforts may enhance the development of civil society in a newly democratizing context. As teachers develop new capacities and take on new roles as mediators, trainers, and advocates for children's rights, their engagement with the society and communities outside of schools may also increase. Teachers may begin to advocate among parents for the value of schooling, serve on committees to resolve school and community conflicts, and increasingly participate in national and international trainings and workshops building networks and avenues for collegiality and solidarity, as well as cross-cultural learning and exchange. They may also participate in civic organizations contributing to the growth of an active civil society -- a key component of a healthy democracy. While my dissertation research does not entail extensive observations of teachers' advocacy work outside of schools, I believe this would be a valuable avenue for further research.

According to Acharya's (2004) theoretical approach, the localization of foreign norms will result in institutional change and development, with existing institutions taking on new tasks and creating new instruments such as policies, laws, procedures, membership management, and the creation of new associated institutions. In the Albanian case, this process can be observed particularly in models adopted from the World Bank that prioritize "rationalization" and "decentralization" of the educational system through the creation of new policies and procedures for teacher certification, assessment, and guidelines for pedagogical practice. In a wider lens, the importation of foreign educational models discursively shifts the character of schools as institutions and, accordingly, frames the role of teachers to fit within the parameters of these new institutional arrangements. Legal frameworks governing schooling have also been adjusted or "harmonized" with select global norms in the interest of increasing domestic and international

legitimacy. The process of decentralization and the re-configuration of power and authority within the educational system are directly associated with larger social, political, and economic aspects of Albanian democratization. Thus, I argue, the development of a more robust concept of educational localization has many important practical and theoretical implications for the study of educational change as a component of democratization.

Dissertation Overview and Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of my central research questions as they are situated in the Albanian educational context and amidst relevant contemporary debates in the academic literature. I employed perspectives from the fields of Comparative and International Education, International Relations, and Educational Anthropology to shape an interdisciplinary interpretive framework for the investigation of educational localization. I then discussed a preliminary model for understanding the concept of localization and a theoretical framework for analyzing how localization may be occurring in the case under study.

Chapter II presents a detailed discussion of my research methodology, epistemology, and an in-depth analysis of my situated identity as a foreign researcher in the Albanian context. I describe the overall model of the vertical case study and provide grounding for the ways in which I have dealt with issues of selection and positionality. I then provide an overview of my research instruments, data sources and collection, time line, and procedure for data analysis.

In Chapter III, “Global Frames, Local Aims: International Educational Transfer and Reform in Albania, 1992-2010,” I explore the internationalization of educational reform in Albania during the first two decades of post-communist democratization. The chapter provides an

overview of international involvement in the Albanian education system. In the second section of the chapter, I discuss the ideological and programmatic cross-currents of international educational policy discourses that have informed Albanian national policy documents. I show that international discourses of education reform during the late 1990s and into the new Millennium promoted a model of education for the global knowledge economy and for democratic citizenship within a liberal form of democracy. I argue that the roles and identities of students and teachers have been increasingly shaped and framed by these powerful discourses. In the third section of Chapter III, I analyze and discuss the narratives of four international experts involved in international educational assistance and find that the composite of their expertise is both a means and an end of educational transfer.

Chapter IV, “Middlemen and Midwives of Reform: The In-Between Worlds of Albanian Education Policy-Makers and Professionals,” focuses on a small set of Albanian educational professionals who become “local experts” through their longstanding engagement with international models and foreign experts on the one hand and local stakeholders and conditions on the other. As “in-betweens,” these professionals worked with a wide range of stakeholders performing a diverse range of tasks including writing textbooks, developing curriculum materials, training teachers, conducting research and advocacy, and crafting national level policies and strategic plans for educational reform. I show how they played an important role by constructing and circulating discourses of change in Albania through their beliefs and professional activities. In particular, one of the most interesting and powerful discursive constructions that emerged through the analysis of their narratives was the new construction of the teacher’s profile based on qualities of individual responsibility, effectiveness, and accountability. I argue that the “in-between” professionals discussed in Chapter IV served as key

intermediaries between the global models discussed in Chapter III and the everyday knowledge and practice of teachers discussed in Chapter V. As such, they are crucial figures in the process of educational reform, localization, and democratization.

Shifting the analysis from the national to the school level, Chapter V, “Agents of Change and Continuity: Albanian Teachers as Mothers, Mentors, and Mediators” delves into rich ethnographic data emerging from my numerous school visits and interviews with Albanian teachers. Through the perspectives of three main teachers (Eda, Rozafa, and Albana), juxtaposed with fieldnotes from classroom observation, this chapter explores the teachers’ multifaceted educational and social roles, their particular beliefs and forms of knowledge, and their cultural and professional practice. Three important theoretical strands frame this chapter. The first is an analysis of teachers as significant agents of both change and continuity in the post-communist social and political environment. The second thread locates the work of teachers within the prevalent global model of the knowledge economy, situating their beliefs and practices within a wider economically driven discursive context. The third theoretical strand investigates teachers’ experiential knowledge or “metis” (Scott, 1999) as an important factor in determining teachers’ “situationally constrained choices” (Cuban 1985; 1986). By juxtaposing teachers’ beliefs about their role with a discussion of their situated practice, this chapter provides an intricate view into the complexity of school life during this period of Albanian democratization.

In the concluding Chapter VI, I revisit my research questions and initial conceptualization of localization in light of key themes explored throughout this dissertation. I then turn back to the theoretical notions of localization and discuss how my multi-level findings enrich and extend our understanding of localization. I discuss the implications of these findings for various fields of study, particularly world culture debates in Comparative and International

Education. I then explore the further contributions of my research to educational policy, reform, and practice. Chapter VI also discusses the limitations inherent in this study and identifies avenues for further research.

Chapter II

Research Methodology and Epistemology

When I first traveled to Albania in September 2002, I had no idea what to expect. As a somewhat well-educated American, I had not heard much about Albania in history classes or on the news. I was open minded and eager to see this new and different society. From the airport road I could see rich green fields, small stone and concrete houses, an occasional donkey cart, and a beautiful view of jagged peaks to the East. The taxi drove us in the direction of the mountains, passing many hand spray-painted signs reading: LAVAZH. What a peculiar word, I thought. My Albanian colleague translated: Car Wash. All along the highway on our way to the capital city, Tirana, at the foothills of the majestic Mt. Dajti, we passed dozens of these makeshift carwashes. I soon learned that the local fondness for Mercedes Benz sedans coupled with the ubiquitous dusty and unkempt roads made the car wash a booming business.

A few days later something odd happened in Tirana. We walked out of our door to cross over the river Lana that runs through the city, and we nearly tripped over a huge bulldozer parked square on the road. It turned out that on that day, demolition of all the illegal structures along the Lana river was to begin by order of the town mayor, Edi Rama. I was quite incredulous. Taking in the little shops and cafes that lined the road, I wondered if they could really just be mowed over with a bulldozer. Sure enough, later that day and for the next several days, the demolition proceeded. I was told that the mayor had a beautification plan in mind and thus these structures, built without legal permits all along the banks of the Lana, would be erased from existence just like that. Here one day and gone the next. It surprised me.

Near the end of my brief two-week visit, I began to think about the kind of research I might be able to do in this unusual society emerging from over 40 years under the brutal communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha. A chance discussion with a friend of my colleague, a U.S. Embassy official, resulted in a meeting with his assistant to brainstorm research ideas. When I met her two days before my departure, we found we had a lot in common including our Masters' degrees in peace education from Teachers College, Columbia University! I discussed potential research interests with this charming Albanian contemporary, and without a moment's hesitation, she flipped open her cell phone. She had a friend at the Ministry of Education and Science that I should meet, she explained. After a brief discussion in Albanian, she informed me that I had a meeting over coffee the following evening with this Vice-Minister. I was shocked at how easy this was and I thanked her! I immediately went home to prepare a draft research proposal.

On the following evening, a Friday, I met the Vice-Minister alone at 7pm at Café Europa off one of the main squares in town. I was overjoyed to meet him, but I played it cool and explained my 1-page research proposal. I wanted to learn about how the education reform strategy for pre-university schooling was being implemented during the democratic transition period. He smiled and looked pleased. Yes, he said, that would be great ... if there *was* a strategy. Then he added, why don't you look at what the internationals are doing? There have been so many projects and no one is keeping track of what has been happening. This would be very valuable. And with that, my research relationship with Albanian education began.

I share these initial impressions to give a sense of the context in which my doctoral research was conceived and my outlook at the time. These brief encounters point to some of the key issues that I will explore in this chapter. For example, what assumptions are embedded in my

cross-cultural interpretations in Albania? What prior knowledge and experience did I employ in deciphering the *way things work* in this new context? What tools could/should I use to make sense of the newness of this place and situate myself appropriately? How should I represent myself to others? Without knowing it, though I was open minded and seemingly without judgment in this first encounter, I brought with me many assumptions about order and rationality, about the way things *should be* (norms) and about what is possible (social opportunities and boundaries). In each of the instances of surprise, my thinking was challenged.⁹

While my relationship with Albania began in 2002, I have been engaged in critically questioning the link between local and global discourses in education for over a decade. I came to this project with a distinct set of values, experiences, and perspectives that directly or indirectly framed the methodology of my investigation and the meanings I brought to my research results. Because I acknowledge my own position as a critical aspect of this dissertation, this chapter discusses my epistemological beliefs and methodology in detail. I then discuss my research model, the rationale for qualitative, ethnographic research, and various selection issues. I also explain in some detail my processes of data collection and data analysis.

Critical and Feminist Epistemologies

With a background in Women's Studies, I have long valued the work of feminist scholars in highlighting the importance of race, class, gender, and sexuality in analyzing social issues. More recently, I have been drawn to feminist critiques of positivist science as excluding these social forces and have thus turned to critical theories of epistemology and knowledge production

⁹ In *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Paul Willis (2000, p. 113) writes, "You cannot be surprised unless you thought that you knew, or assumed, something already, which is then overturned, or perhaps strengthened, or positively diverted, or fulfilled in unexpectedly elegant ways."

to strengthen my research. Many scholars reject traditional positivist approaches to social science research that prioritize objectivity as a mark of effective science. For feminist theorists, the *positionality* rather than the objective stance of the researcher is a critical component of the research process. For example, Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle Yaiser draw the following distinction:

Positivist science assumes a subject-object split where the researcher is taken for granted as the knowing party. The researcher and researched, or knower and knowable, are on different planes within the research process.[...] Unequal power relations between the researcher and the research participants serve to transform the research subject into an object.[...] Positivists traditionally *seek* knowledge... whereas feminists aim at *developing* knowledge *with* their research subjects who bring their own experiential knowledge, concerns, and emotions to the project. (2004, p. 12)

Pursuing this goal of developing research *with* and often *for* research subjects, feminist researchers have prioritized the issue of positionality as a more ethical, responsible, and politically engaged form of practice than the traditional model of presumed detachment and neutrality. Researcher positionality necessitates a self-aware, reflexive researcher that actively engages with the ways in which her/his research is embedded in contexts of structural inequality and power relations. For example, feminist researchers ask questions such as: “Who is the subject of knowledge? How does the social position of the subject affect the production of knowledge?” How is knowledge authorized and who benefits from it? And how are knowledge and power related? (Alcoff and Potter, 1993, pp. 13-14).

These questions help situate both the researcher and the resulting knowledge claims in terms of contextual and historical material conditions. Drawing on Marxian, postmodern, and poststructural theories, feminist epistemologies treat research participants as both subjects of power (with subjugated knowledge) and subjects of history (agents of change) (Roman and

Apple, 1990, p. 65). Further, in critiquing the assumed historical transcendence of the positivist researcher, feminist theorist, Donna Haraway calls for

politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (1988, p. 589)

Haraway's argument resonates with my own sense of position as a researcher in Albania.

Throughout the early stages of my research, I was often aware of myself physically and psychologically as an outsider. While I focused on learning the language and the cultural styles, I experienced a kind of double vision – slowly learning the rules, while still maintaining my outsider identity. Given this sense of myself as a researcher/foreigner, building trust with research participants was a difficult and gradual process. However, throughout the research process, I have maintained that my relationship with research participants must be based upon an awareness and respect for our different structural locations and the power dynamics that exist in and among the cultural worlds we occupy.¹⁰

Feminist researchers further challenge the notion of value-neutral knowledge production. Postmodern feminist Anna Yeatman argues, “The idea of positioning is both relational and political: i.e., the positioning of a knowing subject is located within the time- and space- specific politics of particular relationships of contested domination” (Yeatman, 1994, p. 190). Following this view, I believe it would be irresponsible, unethical, and unproductive to try to posit claims to knowledge without some consideration of the inherently political nature of my research. Beyond the concrete economic factors that play into the research relationship (for instance, the fact that

¹⁰ For instance, as a Western white female graduate student at Cornell, I occupy multiple *political* locations of power and subordination; however, these relations are distinct from everyday Albanian *politics*. Research participants were aware that I was not a member of any Albanian political party or government agency; in this way, at times, my “outsiderness” actually contributed to the building of trust.

my monthly research stipend was approximately *five times* the monthly wage of an Albanian teacher), there were important epistemic challenges as well. These teachers/educators have weathered years of communist and authoritarian schooling as students and then educators. Their ideas about education were formed within a paradigm of Marxist ideology that punished dissent of any kind and enforced subjugation. Alternatively, I was shaped by an American public education infused with democratic and capitalist ideologies that promoted competition, individual achievement, and relative openness to critical thinking. Our paradigms of educational reasoning and our experiential knowledge of schooling were thus extremely different. As Haraway argues, I have no possibility to be a neutral or “innocent” observer (1988, p. 579) in my role as researcher because there are historical circumstances that condition my engagement with research participants. A part of my research is thus to examine these dynamics and work towards the development of situated knowledge claims that are derived from a shared exploration and negotiation of the research questions.

For feminist standpoint theorists, women’s lived experiences are the sites from which scientific questions and knowledge claims should legitimately arise (Harding, 2004b; Smith, 2006). Based on their social location as outsiders vis-à-vis patriarchal power structures and *not* due to any essential female nature, standpoint theorists assert that women have access to privileged forms of knowledge. Contrary to the criticism of opponents, feminist standpoint theorists assert that this theory is not relativist, essentialist or *automatically* privileging of “subdominant” standpoints (Wylie, 2004, p. 341; Harding, 2004b; Jaggar, 2004). Yet, the basis of standpoint epistemology is precisely the collective legitimation of subjugated voices. From this view,

Those who are economically dispossessed, politically oppressed, and socially marginalized and are therefore likely to be discredited as epistemic agents --for

example, as uneducated, uniformed, unreliable-- may actually have a capacity, by virtue of their standpoint, to know things that those occupying privileged positions typically do not know, or are invested in not knowing (or, indeed, are invested in systematically ignoring and denying). (Wylie, 2004, p. 344)

While I do not employ feminist standpoint theory directly in my research, my perspective as a researcher was informed by these debates over epistemic privilege and partial, situated, and subjugated forms of knowledge. As discussed later in this chapter, I found James Scott's (1990) notion of "hidden transcripts" to be particularly useful in helping me identify and analyze the unspoken and camouflaged messages embedded in my interview narratives. Part of the motivation in conducting my research on educational actors in Albania was seeing how international educational policies and programs generated by "expert others" were applied to very particular local contexts without the input of relevant local actors. I believe that examining the tacit and professional knowledge of local educational practitioners will illuminate aspects of this phenomenon that are simply *not visible* from the vantage point of the "expert others" who have created the policies with other interests and frameworks in mind. For this reason, as well as in helping to situate myself as a foreign female graduate student conducting research in Albania, I find the ongoing feminist debates concerning standpoint epistemology provocative and instructive.¹¹

Thus I draw on feminist and other critical theorists not only for their gender perspective, but more broadly, because they entail critiques of dominant forms of knowledge, "that is, knowledge produced and authorized by people in dominant political, social, and economic positions" (Alcoff and Potter, 1993, p. 1). Ultimately, by analyzing the cultural, political,

¹¹ I do not have the space, nor is it my intention to delve deeply into these debates here. However, Sandra Harding's (2004a) work and Alcoff and Potter's (1993) collection provide excellent sources on these internal feminist debates. Poststructuralist political theorist Wendy Brown (1995) offers a poignant critique of feminist standpoint theory on the grounds that it sees women's experience as "truth".

material, and gendered contexts in which research is conducted, feminist theorists provide me with alternative ways of thinking about the process and products of knowledge production.

Recognizing the researcher's positionality also enhances the trustworthiness of research findings, as I discuss below. To examine and stay aware of my position as a researcher in the current study, I employed the practice of reflexive journaling (and drafting memos) throughout the various phases of research. Reflexivity as a principle "generally means attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process. It covers varying attempts to unpack what knowledge is contingent upon, how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda/process has been constituted" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, p. 118). It also ensures that one does not produce an account with a "gaze from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). Documenting the dynamics of interactions through memos and peer debriefing were important forms of reflexivity that I utilized. Following Internal Review Board guidelines for informed consent and discussing research results with participants were other important reflexive aspects of my research. Ultimately, such exercises of reflexivity opened up "possibilities for negotiation over what knowledge claims are made, for whom, why and within what frame of reference" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, p. 119). In the section that follows, I briefly discuss selected excerpts from my reflexive journal that help to illuminate how my position as a researcher impacted and was affected by power relations in the research process.

Positionality, Reflexivity, and the Research Experience

Because there are so many layers involved in qualitative, ethnographic cross-cultural research, keeping a reflexive journal allowed me to unpack everyday interactions and evolving

relationships that took on increasing importance in my research. I could include a number of incidents here, but the two included below are particularly illustrative of the kinds of power relations I encountered in the research process. The first set of entries recounts some of my reflections on the process of gaining formal access to Albanian schools in Tirana. This process took a total of three very frustrating months. The second incident took place fairly late in my research during a teacher interview. I realized after this incident that the feelings and perceptions of this teacher were not unique, and that most (if not all) of the teachers I interviewed and observed were concerned with “looking good” in front of their foreign observer. Taken together, these reflections tell a story not only about how I engaged with my research participants, but also about the various meanings they brought to our interactions. I discuss these issues following the excerpts below.

Memo: January 27, 2009

The Municipal Education Directorate has moved locations and now resides on a small side street off of the newly named President George W. Bush Road. When you enter the gates, you walk up the driveway and then up two narrow sets of stairs on the outside to enter the building at the 2nd floor. Entering the concrete block building, you come into a shaded hallway with a blank door directly in front and a narrow staircase to the left. If you go up the stairway, there is an office at the top and four more offices along a narrow hallway that is a bit like a catwalk because it overlooks the lower hallway of offices. The feeling is of a prison type space. All the doors are closed, and occasional people hang out in front of one or another door waiting for the occupant to wave them in. Some people smoke while they wait, so the air becomes stale and smoky. The hallways are dim and faint. There is no central directory or map, so if you don't know which office belongs to the person you will go to see, you must wander around looking until you find it. There is no

front office or secretary. I walked back downstairs to look for the office of Suela¹². I eventually found it and there were a few other people waiting outside....

Memo: January 29, 2009

I finalized the letter yesterday and set out this morning to the Directorate again. I found the office of the Director, just down the hall from Suela, who is either an inspector or Director of Qualifications. I waited outside with another man for a bit, but then a few more people came to the door and they just went in to the secretary's office. I decided to go in too. A man in the hallway lit a cigarette and puffed away. You could hear elevated female voices behind the door in the Director's office. Inside the doorway, the secretary's desk sat in a small room with cement blocks painted light green, and there was an adjacent office bigger than Suela's. The secretary, a thin blond youngish woman with a firm disposition and a dark line of eye makeup over her eyes, sat behind her desk. She worked the computer, the phone, and the various entryways. She was the gatekeeper. A woman was speaking with her when I came in. The woman was a bit upset and had some questions about her certifications. The secretary told the woman firmly and directly that all the offices down the hallway were inspectors and she needed to take her question to one of the inspectors (she didn't say which one). The woman asked who and where. The secretary repeated that all the offices on that side were inspectors and she should go to one. Then the woman left. Meanwhile the secretary was stamping a guy's small passbook with the Director's stamp, and there was another woman standing with her talking. A guy came in and spoke in a fast paced annoyed kind of way to her and she also raised her voice and seemed to tell him that she could not help him. I couldn't understand what she said in Albanian.

Next, it was my turn. I was already thinking what an unwelcoming place it was. The secretary seemed to be yelling at and arguing with everyone. And everyone was also annoyed with her. People came in and out of the door and tried to ask her things. I gave her my papers and explained as best I could what my purpose was. I said that I needed to get the signature of the Director so that I could begin my research. She soon took my papers into the Director's office where the heated discussions, which sounded like several women

¹² This is a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of the research participant.

arguing, continued. I wondered what on earth the Director would be arguing about. After a few minutes the secretary came out without the papers and said the Director would look them over. I was under the impression that Suela had already provided these papers and thus the Director had already seen them. I was frustrated and did not want to return, but could not adequately express myself so I called my Albanian husband. He talked with the secretary and he explained that Suela had said I should give the letter to the Director. The secretary then explained that the Director would speak with Suela about my request and one of them would see about what to do next. But Suela was not in the building because she was out at a school overseeing the exams. I was totally confused. Suela told me to come bring the letter to the Director, and I also thought she had told me she already spoke with the Director and initially she had concerns about my research but decided it was okay. But now, the Director had to speak with Suela because, according to the secretary, Suela is in charge of projects in the schools. Now, why she did not say this to me, I don't know.

My husband told me that he talked to Suela (by cellphone) and she would have to see the letter, and then she would contact me. But I was not satisfied with this so I called my colleague at the National Institute for Curriculum and Training on his cellphone. He was outside the city and could not hear me over the phone. He said we could meet tomorrow in his office. I waited in the Director's office and the secretary called Suela and she gave the phone to me. Suela told me in English that she would see the letter and get back to me tomorrow. I repeated, tomorrow? And she said, hopefully. I then decided to leave.

The whole experience was, in my personal opinion, rather ridiculous. I have to walk a fine line between being the assertive foreigner and the annoying outsider. In the end, I can pull some strings to get access, but if I push too hard, the doors may close. This is a difficult balance.

Memo: February 11, 2009

I want to write about how as a researcher, a young American woman, I get positioned here – by the Institute, by the Ministry, by the Director, by my colleagues, by the teachers, by everyone. And I think about how I look and how I present myself. I think about what I know and don't know and what I do and don't do all the time!! I think about who I am and who this research makes me. The fact that the Municipal Education Director is scared and

wants to block my research is quite instructive actually. Who is she making me out to be? What kind of power is she giving to me? What do the teachers make of me? They forgive my imperfect Albanian language skills by comparing me to their “nusja” – the foreign wife of the teacher’s son who lives abroad. The teacher says she understands me and is “dakort/in agreement” with my IRB consent form. She doesn’t challenge me at all, and she is skeptical that I will receive any challenges from school Directors or others.

Memo: March 6, 2009

After garnering written permission from the Ministry of Education and asking the U.S. Embassy staff to send an email to the Municipal Education Director on my behalf, I am finally going to get my letter. I went back to the Directorate for the sixth time today to pick it up. It is again rainy and cold, but not horrible. When I got there at 10am, the Director was handing out chocolates and was feeling very happy. People were gathered around chatting and wishing each other well. When I looked into her office, I saw about 10 different flower bouquets on her conference table. I realized that it was a holiday and at first thought it was for Women’s Day (March 8) but then found out that Teachers Day in Albania is tomorrow and they celebrate today. Hence all her flowers! She had the letter for me, but said she needed to make some revisions and would have the final letter for me on Monday morning. I asked if it was sure, and she smiled and said yes, “sigurisht/sure”. She brought me into her office and offered me some flowers. I smiled and said I was going to ask her for a coffee, but there was no time. She wanted me to take some flowers, so I took some small pretty bouquet with slightly droopy flowers (I didn’t want to take a really nice one) – she tried to give me a nicer one, but I took that one which had some orange roses and other things. It was nice. And extremely hilarious that after all this tension, here she is now giving me flowers...

Memo: June 18, 2009

Teachers told me in their interviews about their daily pressures and the difficulties that sometimes occur talking with parents and trying to resolve the conflicts in the school. There are both formal and informal pressures on teachers to award the higher grades, particularly for the older, graduating classes.

The more I thought about the situation of these teachers, the more I understood the complexity of their role in schools and communities. At the same time, the more I talked with them, the more I became aware of my own complex multiple roles – as researcher, foreigner – American, mother, woman, wife of an Albanian, cultural outsider/insider. As a participant observer in schools, I started to examine not only how I saw others, but also how the teachers saw me. In one interview with a very talkative sociology teacher in an urban high school, these perceptions of my role came into new focus. We sat in a local café, right next to the school, to record our interview after observing two of her classes. I had so many eager questions about her methods and ideas about teaching – I wanted to know every facet of her work out of curiosity. But we happened to be sitting next to the school Director, vice Director, and a few other senior teachers who were taking a coffee break at the I. As I began the interview, Sonila (the teacher) turned toward the staff in the next booth and said with a nervous smile under her breath, “Now I have three Directors!” My translator/assistant translated this even though the comment was not meant for me. I quietly asked the translator what the teacher meant by that. She said, the school Director and us – we are all her Directors. Then I realized, this teacher felt interrogated, she felt I was there to evaluate her and make sure she was doing her job correctly. Though I tried to explain repeatedly (even after following the informed consent process) that I just wanted to learn about her work and I was not going to evaluate her in any way, I could not escape her feeling that I held this power over her.

Before embarking on my research journey, I was filled with anxiety about two things. First, as an outsider, I wondered what I could possibly claim to know about the world of Albanian educators. Second, I worried about how I could avoid imposing my own beliefs, assumptions, and foreign perceptions on the research process, or worse, causing harm to research participants. Understanding feminist epistemology helped me grapple constructively with these concerns, but they remained salient. What I did not anticipate, however, were the anxieties I would face coming from my research participants. In my experience as a researcher in Albania, I

was constantly positioned by others in very different ways. For some teachers, my research represented an opportunity to learn from an educated outsider, while for others, participating in my study was a chance to teach the foreign “expert” something new and be recognized for one’s own expertise. Many of the teachers seemed both eager to open up to me and, at the same time, concerned about how I would judge them. Similarly, the more time I spent in schools, the more I began to recognize how my presence there became entangled in existing power relations. And so, by reflecting on how I was positioned by others, I learned a lot about the dynamics of the school, the teachers’ roles within the school, and the kinds of pressures and anxieties the teachers faced.

The resistance I encountered at the Municipal Education Office was complicated and also defied my expectations. I had received very positive endorsement from higher authorities prior to my arrival at the Municipal Director’s office. All my credentials were in order. But in the end, the Director felt the need to veto my entry into schools for several crucial weeks. It was once again political. I came to represent for her yet another foreigner poking around in her schools and reporting on their weaknesses, which were ultimately her weaknesses. In a very contentious political time, when elections were looming and her position was potentially in jeopardy, my research seemed to represent a serious threat to her. It also could have been more personal – perhaps she had had a falling out with someone in the Institute who supported my research, and her initial refusal was a kind of retribution. Once again, I unknowingly became a pawn in a sea of local politics, this time at the municipal level.

The process of writing these research memos and reflecting on these experiences ultimately served two important purposes. First, it helped me grapple with the intellectual and emotional challenges of conducting hands on qualitative research in a foreign culture and, to a large degree, a foreign language. More importantly, these memos also became a key aspect of

my methodology because they allowed me to critical analyze and interpret my interview and observation data. For example, by reflecting on and analyzing my research relationship with the teachers, I gained new insights into the kinds of pressures they faced as well as their strategies for coping with difficult school environments. Using data gathered through “participant observation” in schools has long been a critical component of educational anthropology and ethnography. In a similar fashion, these reflective memos contributed to the durability and thoroughness of my data analysis and reporting.

Methodology

For pragmatists as well as for an increasing number of researchers from various epistemological traditions, both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used to address most social science problems. Indeed, the use of “mixed methods” is rapidly gaining popularity across academic disciplines. For noted qualitative researchers, Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln, “Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm” (1998, p. 195). The burden is thus on the researcher to determine the best methodological approach to address her/his questions and contribute to the growth of knowledge in a given academic field. Below I discuss my research methodology including qualitative, ethnographic, and comparative approaches drawing from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, political science, and education.

A rationale for qualitative methodology. A survey of literature in the fields of comparative education and educational anthropology indicates that many researchers are

increasingly focused on context as an important factor in understanding the effects of globalization on national and local educational policies and practices. While large quantitative sociological studies lend strong support to a thesis of an expanding “world culture” (Boli and Thomas, 1999; Ramirez, 2003), ethnography and case studies provide rich description of how educational actors (such as teachers and local policy makers) interpret, adapt and/or contest globalized policies and educational models. World culture proponents concede that while their methodologies enable them to draw strong inferences at the national level across countries and decades, “there are many possible sources of error in data so removed from primary sources”; indeed they contend, “there is much to criticize in our work, especially from the point of view of those who emphasize qualitative, in-depth case studies” (Meyer, Kamens, and Benavot, 1992, pp. 4-5).

Anthropologist Katheryn Anderson-Levitt’s collection, *Local Meanings, Global Schooling* (2003) addresses these gaps. She asserts that based on evidence from several anthropological studies, we can conclude that “world culture theorists cannot afford to ignore what happens on the ground in particular ministries of education, provincial centers, and local classrooms” (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p. 17). My own analysis of comparative education literature on questions of localization determined that small-n, qualitative studies were more resistant to faulty assumptions about states, schools, and international agencies as uniform actors and more effective in highlighting the ways in which individual agency and a variety of cultural and contextual factors significantly influenced policy and program implementation in diverse societies.¹³ Furthermore, I argued that the qualitative and comparative research surveyed

¹³ This point is based on an unpublished literature review I conducted of over 30 articles sampled from the following four major comparative education journals between the years of 1995-2007: *Compare*; *Comparative Education*; *Comparative Education Review*; and *International Journal of Educational Development*.

provided more nuanced understandings of local “realities” (structures, conditions, practices, etc.) that can in turn help researchers and practitioners alike to avoid the perils of negative “unintended consequences” to policy implementation (Welmond, 2002).

In the subfield of democratic citizenship and civic education, E. Doyle Stevick and Bradley Levinson (2007) have produced an important anthology of international comparative research. These authors note: “recent qualitative research into the actual practices and meanings of civic education has boomed, both with individual case studies and innovative comparative work” (Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p. 5). They explain that “as the primary agents who mediate between education policies, official curriculum, textbooks, and student learning in their classrooms,” teachers have become the preferred focus of much of this research, a position that is “warranted particularly in contexts of rapid political change—in countries emerging from Soviet occupation, for example, or in other places trying to move beyond authoritarian legacies” (Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p. 6). For these authors, large-n macro-level studies do not offer the local, cultural and historical richness or depth to allow for transferability from case to case. On the other hand, a qualitative approach that uses interviews and observation to examine culture, meaning, local practice and specific institutional arrangements is better suited for cross case comparison (Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p. 12).

Given the relevance of these studies to my own research, I am extremely encouraged by this so-called research “boom.” These anthologies and others (such as Levinson, Foley, and Holland, 1996 and Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) underscore the effectiveness of qualitative methodologies in enabling researchers to understand how and why foreign educational models are interpreted, adapted and/or contested in specific local contexts. These studies also provide a

solid empirical grounding and a convincing rationale for my selection of qualitative research methods.

An overview of my research methodology. Building on the work of Bray and Thomas (1995)¹⁴, Vavrus and Bartlett propose the vertical case study “as a means of comparing knowledge claims among actors with different social locations in an attempt to situate local action and interpretation within a broader cultural, historical, and political investigation” (2006, p. 95). They suggest a process of deep investigation of a particular site—a school, educational NGO, community, or government institution—with a concurrent analysis of the ways in which “historical trends, social structures, and national and international forces shape local processes at this site” (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006, p. 96). The authors claim that such a multi-level study is necessary to understand the issue under investigation in context rather than as an isolated entity or phenomenon. Furthermore, because the vertical case study aims to help “expose the gap between rhetoric and practice” at different social levels (Crossley and Villiamy, 1984, p. 198 cited in Vavrus and Bartlett, 2007, p. 98), it is an ideal form to help me investigate such issues in Albania. As with my study, the goal of the vertical case study is to “develop a thorough understanding of the particular at each level and to analyze how these understandings produce similar and different interpretations of the policy, program, or phenomenon under study” (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2007, p. 99). Thus, the vertical case study provides an ideal methodological approach to my investigation of global educational models as they move from the policy level to the level of localized implementation in particular educational contexts.

¹⁴ These authors conclude that in the field of comparative education “much, and perhaps most, research requires multilevel comparative analysis in order to achieve a full and balanced understanding of its subjects” (Bray & Thomas, 1995, p. 488).

As previously noted, my research is also influenced by the work of educational anthropologists and critical ethnographers. According to Kathleen Hall (1999),

Anthropologists are also examining the interrelationships among processes of cultural production at different levels of the social scale (within global organizations, national policies, institutional contexts, and everyday practices) as well as across the parameters of time and space. To capture these multidimensional processes, anthropologists are designing analytic frameworks that make use of multiple concepts of culture. (pp. 144-145)

The proliferation of notions of “culture” has complicated (and likely enriched) current forms of anthropological and ethnographic research. The term culture is used in so many different ways and rarely simply to signify *a people* such as Albanians. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) note, “What would once have appeared as a logical impossibility—ethnography without the ethnos—has come to appear, to many, perfectly sensible, even necessary” (p. 2). In other words, research based on essentialized and reified notions of “culture” is no longer tenable. In light of this shift, anthropologists are grappling with new global challenges such as “issues of space and its social construction, of collective identity and its contestations, of subject formation and practices of resistance, of the location of anthropologists and anthropology in the politics of place and culture” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, p. 26).

These debates over meanings of culture have also been taken up in the fields of critical theory, globalization studies, and cultural studies. One example is the work of Douglas Kellner who is interested in the intersections of cultural politics and critical theories of globalization. For Kellner (2000), “culture is an especially complex and contested terrain today as global cultures permeate local ones and new configurations emerge that synthesize both poles, providing contradictory forces of colonization *and* resistance, global homogenization *and* new local hybrid

forms and identities” (p. 305). These are precisely the kinds of cultural processes addressed in my research.

Methodologically, the contested nature of the concept of culture has significant implications. For a new generation of critically oriented qualitative researchers, including myself, these issues have fomented “a double crisis of representation and legitimation” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 21). Debates over defining and “writing culture” (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Behar and Gordon, 1995), the politics of position (positionality), the bases of authority for knowledge claims, and the “crisis” of representation are central concerns for me throughout the research process. Time-honored research traditions are in question and, while there are exciting new avenues for research and knowledge production, the path is not an easy or clear one. Individual researchers must negotiate these challenges in ways that best fit their research goals.

Issues of selection. Theoretically, from the perspective of Comparative and International Education research, Albania is similar to Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe’s (2006) research in Mongolia. They note, “For the ‘strong cases’ of convergence, that is, for systems from which one would not expect convergence toward an international model,” comparative researchers will gain a richer understanding of the local impact of foreign educational borrowing (p. 3). Like Mongolia, Albania offers a strong case to examine both convergence at the policy level and localization at the local level of educational practice. With so many years under an authoritarian regime, particularly the isolationist ideology of Enver Hoxha, one would not expect democratic citizenship education to become the dominant model for Albanian education reform. Furthermore, with its history of disengagement from Western powers throughout the post-WWII era, Albania is one of the least likely cases for espousing European and Western models. Yet,

with the influx of a range of global models in the post-socialist period, the focus on education for democratic citizenship and the global knowledge economy has become dominant. This puzzle demands further investigation.

Following my theoretical framework discussed in Chapter I, Albania also serves as an excellent test case to look at the role of teachers in localizing global educational models. For the most part, Albanian teachers have had very little actual experience of democracy and limited exposure to Western-style educational norms and models in their own educational and academic backgrounds. Thus, if my study showed true convergence and “isomorphism” at the school level, with a consistent enactment of identical sets of global norms demonstrated in teachers’ words and practice, such findings would lend strong evidence to the power of “world culture” and the feasibility of the complete adoption and enactment of global norms in extremely diverse local school contexts. Alternatively, if I were to find wide differentiation among various school contexts and gaps between teachers’ words and their classroom practice, then further explanation beyond the world culture thesis would have to be explored.

Apart from my theoretical rationale, my selection of Albania as a research site was also influenced by my fascination with the level and significance of change occurring there. When I first encountered Albanian society, I was working as a “global coordinator” in a New York based peace organization. Our mission was to try to “introduce peace education into curricula and communities worldwide”. As the global coordinator, I had frequent contact with educators and activists from very different regions of the world including South America, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern and Western Europe. In our annual meetings, it was clear that these educators brought forward very different ideas about how best to educate for peace and justice in their distinct contexts. They all faced particular institutional, political, economic, professional,

and often personal constraints to implementing our common vision. At times, these constraints led to competing priorities. For example, the Northern European member of our advisory board sought to develop more powerful theoretical approaches to peace education (with theory leading to practice). The Latin American representatives, on the other hand, wanted to forefront activist models for participatory democracy and human rights (with practice leading to theory). The Palestinian and Israeli members of the advisory board faced entirely different constraints that prevented them from physically collaborating in their peace efforts. Some members wanted to focus on school-based activities while others wanted to focus our collective efforts at the Ministerial level. Some wanted to focus attention to the immediate issues of actual violent conflict in their part of the world, while others prioritized a long term approach to broad social change over decades to come.

The experience of trying to understand and mediate these various perspectives led me to question the universality and local relevance of the core principles that we all allegedly espoused. I began to wonder how conditions “on the ground” affected these actors’ motivation for peace education and their strategies for implementation at various levels. During this time, my organization had a project in Albania. The opportunity arose to visit Albania, and I soon decided that it would be a rich context in which to explore my questions about the apparent disconnections between global normative models and local realities.

Another aspect that lends support to my case selection is my sustained commitment to understanding educational change in Albania. At the end of the day, this research project has spanned over nine years. After engaging in several months of preliminary research and cultural immersion in Albania, I was able to acquire a good foundation in the local language and establish solid social and professional contacts there. The intensive process of qualitative

research simply would not have been possible without such a prolonged engagement with Albanian culture and society.

The selection of interview participants. The many months I spent in Albania enabled me to develop a strong network of trusted colleagues there. In a society such as Albania emerging from decades under an oppressive dictatorship, trust is a very delicate issue, particularly with outsiders. Under the previous regime, foreigners were viewed with disdain, distrust, and enmity (except for rare exceptions). The Albanian people were forbidden from foreign travel and punished severely for unsuccessful attempts to leave the country. The Party's propaganda denounced the West and extolled the Albanian leadership as beyond fault. The results of this kind of oppressive political structure and ideology were apparent even a decade and a half after the regime change. In many ways, Albania continued to be a "closed" society, particularly for a foreigner asking questions.

There were some people however –mostly advocates for change-- who welcomed the opportunity to speak with a foreign researcher. I also had the distinct advantage of being married to an Albanian citizen and speaking a fair amount of the language. Through the educational work my husband was involved in, I gained initial access to colleagues in the Albanian educational community. From there, I was introduced and referred to other important actors. Despite my identity as an outsider and the legacy of distrust, my interviewees always treated me with respect. They recognized my authentic interest in Albanian education, which was an interest we shared, and graciously helped to facilitate my research. In this way, I followed a snowball approach to the selection of research participants.

As my research design solidified, I also employed a purposive (or theoretical) sampling approach. I wanted to look at educational actors at various levels and in various kinds of institutions. I thus sought out interviews with representatives from key international organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, the World Bank, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Organization for Migration, Council of Europe, Soros Foundation, Save the Children, Global Care, and others. I requested interviews from representatives of key local organizations such as the Albanian Center for Human Rights, MJAFT, the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR), the Center for Democratic Education, Bethany Center, and others. I took a similar approach in selecting representatives from Albanian governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Education, the National Pedagogical Institute, and municipal education offices. While I initiated purposive selection of these organizational actors, I also again relied on trusted networks to facilitate access. In many cases, without a friendly phone call to a potential interviewee from a trusted colleague, the door would not have been opened for my interviews.

The selection of schools and teachers. For the selection of schools to observe during my dissertation research, I followed a similar strategy. First, according to my theoretical framework for investigating localization of global educational models, I aimed to compare the projects of two different kinds of organizations, one international and the other local. As discussed in Chapter I, I reasoned that project participants would adapt and localize the International Organization project to a greater degree than a project run by an Albanian NGO. The rationale for this belief was Acharya's (2004) argument that localization takes place as international norms are adapted and "pruned" to fit with existing local traditions. A project created by a local NGO

would require less adaptation by project participants as it was created from a more “local” perspective. Alternatively, an IO project would be directly imported from international sources, thus requiring more active translation, adaptation, and localization by project participants in order to create resonance with existing local traditions and practices. For the sake of establishing a wider range of possibilities for localization, and thus offering a more nuanced understanding of the process, I also aimed to select schools located both in the urban center and in more rural, periphery, or sub-urban areas. These were the preliminary theoretical parameters governing my school site selection.

Once I arrived in Albania, however, the selection process was also influenced by several other factors. The first factor was availability of existing educational projects and my ability to gain access to key stakeholders in those projects. After over two months of initial attempts to visit a range of schools, I narrowed my options down to four. Because I was denied access to schools in the municipal district of the capital city where I was living for several weeks, I began my research with a grade school located in the small municipality of Lezhe nestled between two major cities, Tirana and Shkodra. This school had participated in a number of different projects, but my connection to it came through the help of colleagues at the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR). The AFCR had organized a project with several local schools focusing on conflict resolution education and peer mediation. After looking over the curriculum for this project and speaking with some of the teachers and trainers involved, I determined that this project fit my criteria for a locally based democracy-related educational project.

Through colleagues at AFCR, I was able to identify a number of “exemplary” teachers who participated in this project in center and periphery schools in Tirana and Lezha. Thus,

another criterion for my selection of teachers to observe within the selected schools was their level of engagement in the project and their purported role as a model for other teachers.

Theoretically, I chose exemplary teachers because I reasoned that localization could best be understood by observing and interviewing the most experienced and well-trained teachers involved in democracy-related educational projects. Following this logic, I ultimately selected three school sites for extended observation based on their participation in democracy-related projects, their location in an urban center or periphery, the availability of well-trained teachers, and the schools' accessibility.¹⁵

The second school-based project I observed was a UNICEF pilot project for minority rights. This was one of two democracy-related educational projects run by an international organization that I located during my fieldwork period in Albania. The pilot project was run in the municipality of Korca, Albania. I traveled to Korca for one week and conducted interviews and observations in two schools associated with this project. I also interviewed school directors, the municipal education director in Korca, and the UNICEF project director in Tirana. Although I collected rich data in Korca, due to the brief nature of my visit there and the lack of opportunity to develop a more sustained relationship with the teachers over several weeks of observation, the Korca data does not play a significant role in the discussion of my dissertation findings in Chapters III and V. Instead, I compared a center and a periphery school *within* the capital city Tirana and a third school in the medium sized town of Lezhe.

Through the research process, I realized that these AFCEP and UNICEF projects had the added benefit of enabling me to observe school-based initiatives as an aspect of Albanian

¹⁵ As noted earlier in this chapter, gaining access to Albanian schools was a significant undertaking that entailed two months of painstaking negotiation. This experience, though not within the scope of the current chapter, speaks to the level of politicization of the education system and the absence of transparency in educational decision-making. These issues are taken up in other sections of my dissertation.

national education reform. The projects were designed in part to provide teachers with opportunities to fulfill a new policy objective of devolving 15% of curricular time to subjects determined and managed directly by schools and teachers during what were called “free hours”. This policy directive was part of the new World Bank-sponsored Educational Excellence and Equity Project (EEEEP) which aimed to decentralize educational authority and increase school autonomy. Modules on democratic citizenship, human rights, and conflict resolution education were all new options for teachers to fulfill this policy objective.

Research instruments. Between 2003 and 2009, throughout 32 months of research in Albania, I interviewed 45 different participants (some of them in multiple interviews), conducted 16 hours of classroom observation and an additional 50 hours of general participant observation in schools. I also conducted over 55 hours of participant observation in educational meetings, trainings, and conferences held outside of schools. As noted earlier, I conducted interviews with national education officials, staff in international and non-governmental organizations, foreign educational consultants, program managers, school directors, and teachers. Teacher interviews were conducted in Albanian with the help of my translator and research assistant, whose alias is Sihana, and then transcribed into English. I conducted all other interviews in English, then developed the transcriptions¹⁶ and analyzed the data. Most interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and then transcribed. In some cases, no recordings were possible, and I took extensive notes during interviews. During field visits and classroom observations, my Albanian assistant and I also took extensive fieldnotes on the layout of classrooms, classroom

¹⁶ Some additional interviews in English were transcribed with generous help from my wonderful intern Luciana Debenedetti at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars during Fall 2011.

interactions, and curriculum material. In many cases, classroom dialogue between the teacher and students, as well as curriculum materials, were translated and transcribed by Sihana.

In addition to these interviews and observations, I also researched and analyzed numerous policy and program documents. These include the following: *National Education Strategy 2004-2015*; *National Strategy for Social and Economic Development*; *Educational Excellence and Equity Project*; *Curriculum Reform Plan for Years 10-12*; and the *National Strategy for Integration and Development*. I also collected and reviewed publications from international and local organizations including UNICEF, World Bank, OECD, Council of Europe, USAID, the Albanian Center for Human Rights, the Center for Democratic Education, and the Albanian Education Development Project. These materials were analyzed with a view toward developing an in-depth understanding of the various educational discourses that have flowed into Albania during the last two decades as part of democratic assistance projects.

When possible, I also participated in events and conferences hosted by these local and international organizations. For instance, I participated in the Southeast European regional networking conference of Council of Europe country representatives for democratic citizenship education held in Montenegro during May 2009. I also participated in a local stakeholder meeting to discuss educational reform hosted by the Friends of Albanian Education NGO in Tirana in December 2003. In June 2009, I observed meetings and trainings concerned with educational reform hosted by the national Pedagogical Institute, and I participated in a number of teacher training workshops during 2003-2005 as part of the United Nations Department of Disarmament / Hague Appeal for Peace Project on disarmament education with teachers in Gramsh and Shkodra. In 2007, I also observed a local NGO training (Global Care Albania) in the

periphery region of Bathore. Participant observation in these workshops, meetings, and conferences provided supplemental data for my investigation.

Overview of data sources. The table below provides a summary of these various data sources and the number of interviews and school visits I conducted for this project.

Table 2.1. Data Sources, 2003-2009

| Data Source | Number of Interviews | Site Visit – yes or no | Participant Observation and Classroom Observation Time (in hrs) |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Albanian Teacher interviews and observations | Eda – Democracy High School (3) | yes | 3 classes (4 hrs) |
| | Sonila – Democracy High School (1) | yes | 2 classes (2 hrs) |
| | Rozafa – Equality Middle School (3) | yes | 2 classes (2 hrs) |
| | Albana – Community Grade School (3) | yes | 4 classes (3 hrs) |
| | Valbona - Equality Middle School (1) | yes | 1 class (1 hr.) |
| | Roza – Korca elementary (1) | yes | 2 classes (2 hrs) |
| | Korca high school teacher (1) | yes | 1 class (1 hr.) |
| | Mira – Tirana periphery (Kamza) school (1) | yes | 1 class (1 hr.) |
| | Bathore teachers | yes | Training (3 hrs) |
| | Shkodra teachers | yes | Trainings (15 hrs) |
| | Gramsh teachers | yes | Trainings (15 hrs) |
| Kenete teachers/school | yes | School visit (2 hrs) | |
| School Director and Vice-Director interviews and observations | Korca Elementary (1) | yes | School visit (2 hrs) |
| | Lezhe - Community Grade School (1) | yes | School visits (2 hrs) |
| | Korca High School (1) | yes | School visit (1 hr) |
| | Tirana Equality Middle School (1) | yes | School visits (3 hrs) |
| | Tirana Democracy High School (1) | yes | School visits (4 hrs) |
| | Tirana periphery school (Kamza) | yes | School visit (1 hr) |
| Municipal Directors interviews and observation | Korca (1) | yes | Office visit (1 hr) |
| | Lezhe (1) | yes | Office visit (1 hr) |
| | Tirana (3) | yes | Office visits (5 hrs) |
| Ministry and National Pedagogical Institute officials - interviews and observations | Andi – Curriculum expert at Pedagogical Institute (6) | yes | Institute observation and trainings (5 hrs) |
| | Spiro - Consultant to Ministry and World Bank (4) | yes | Ministry observations (2 hrs) |
| | Director of Institute (1) | yes | No observation |
| | Institute Director of Teacher Training (1) | yes | No observation |
| | Director of Curriculum (2) | yes | Institute visits and trainings (4 hrs) |
| | Ministry Director of pre-university curriculum (1) | yes | Ministry visits (2 hrs) |
| Local NGO and INGO staff interviews and observations | Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Dispute Resolution (3) | yes | Conference and trainings (4 hrs) |
| | Albanian Center for Peace and Disarmament Education (2) | yes | Office and trainings (5 hrs) |
| | Albanian Center for Human Rights (1) | yes | Office visits (2 hrs) |
| | Bethany Center (2) | yes | Office visits (2 hrs) |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| | Center for Democratic Education (1) | no | No observation |
| | Former Albanian Educational Development Project / Soros (1) | no | Conference observation/ participation (4 hrs) |
| | Global Care - Albania (3) | yes | Training, activity observation and school visits (4 hrs) |
| | MJAFT (2) | yes | Activity observations (4 hrs) |
| | Save the Children - Albania (2) | yes | Office visits (2 hrs) |
| Internationals and local staff with international organizations - interviews and observations | UNICEF (4) | yes | Office visits (4 hrs) |
| | UNESCO (2) | no | No observation |
| | UNDP (2) | yes | Office visit (1 hr) |
| | International Committee of the Red Cross (1) | no | No observation |
| | Council of Europe (1) | yes | Conference observation |
| | Croatian Education Ministry official (1) | no | No observation |
| | International Consultant (1) | no | No observation |
| | International Organization on Migration (1) | yes | Office visit (1 hr) |
| | U.S. Embassy / USAID (1) | yes | Office visit and activity observation (4 hrs) |
| Totals | Interview Participants=45 Total # of Interviews=70 | Hours of classroom observation: 16 hours Hours of additional school observation: 50 hours Hours of non-school educational observation: 55 hours Total Observation= 121 hours | |

Overview of data analysis. As shown in the table above, interviews and observations provided the main sources of data collected for this dissertation. Policy and program documents provided supplemental and background data as well. These three sources provided rich data for the analysis of my research questions and the verification of my findings. The analysis of qualitative data is a prolonged and recursive process entailing numerous stages. My extended interviews were translated (when necessary) and transcribed in full, and reviewed several times by myself and my assistants. For the most part, the analysis of this data then followed from Riessman’s work on narrative analysis. Riessman argues, “Because it takes language seriously, structural narrative analysis provides tools for investigators who want to interrogate how participants use speech to construct themselves and their history” (2008, p. 103). At various points in the analysis of my dissertation data, I employed all three of Riessman’s analytic approaches: thematic, structural, and performance. Combined, these approaches analyze questions of “what”, “how”, “who”, “when” and “why” as related to aspects of the participant

narratives. For the most part, my initial analysis focused on the central themes of actors' role and identity, their various forms of knowledge, and their practice. Then, after further review and analysis of the transcripts, I added the additional coding theme of relationships. I began by looking at the teachers' narratives (Chapter V), then zoomed in on the narratives of the internationals (Chapter III), and finally analyzed the narratives of the national professionals and policy makers (Chapter IV).

It was only after extensive analysis, coding, and writing, during the last stages of my dissertation, that my approach turned from looking at the content of the interviews, to attending more to the process and relational aspects – for Riessman (2008), this is the performative component of the interviews. It was during this final stage that I also incorporated the theoretical work of James C. Scott in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990). In this text, Scott's project is to systematically and theoretically unveil the power relations embedded in public and private exchanges and performances. He asks:

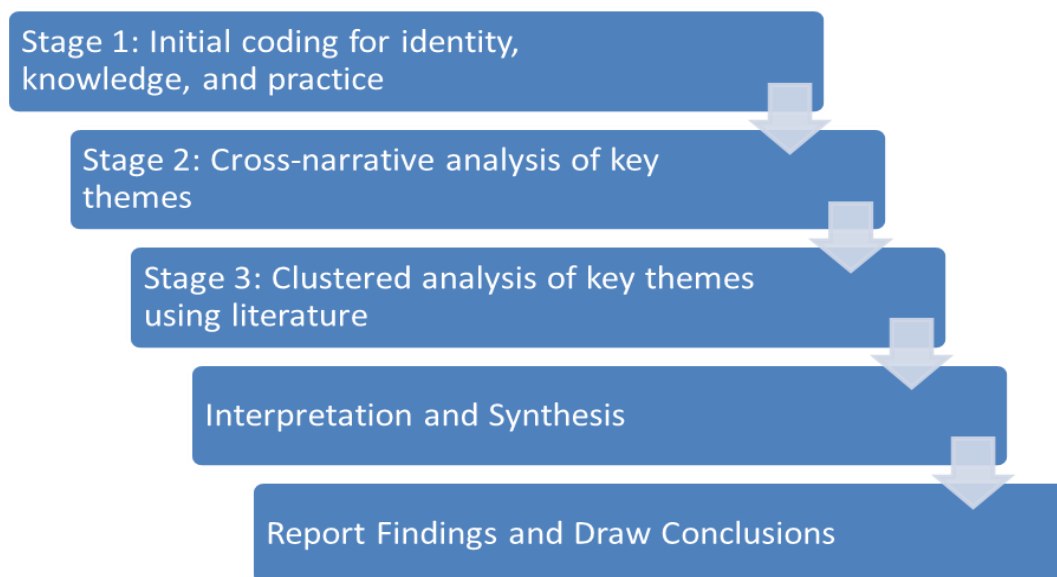
How do we study power relations when the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and when the powerful may have an interest in overdramatizing their reputation and mastery? If we take all of this at face value we risk mistaking what may be a tactic for the whole story. Instead, I try to make out a case for a different study of power that uncovers contradictions, tensions, and immanent possibilities. Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of *both* hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination. (Scott, 1990, p. xii)

Scott's analysis informed my understanding of the kind of power-laden "off stage" behavior that I observed, that was directed at me, or that I was told about by research participants. Similarly, I also drew on the work of Britzman (2000) and Villenas (2000; 2005) to

help me think through and disentangle some of the relational aspects of the interviews, and in particular, the embedded power relations. Thus, in the analysis of data for Chapters III-V (but primarily Chapter IV), I discuss the results of this analysis of power relations in more depth. While these aspects of my data analysis came later in the process, they are nonetheless consistent with my epistemology and research approach throughout the project as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Stages of data analysis. To provide a more precise account of the intensity of my data analysis process, I have graphically depicted and explained the stages below.

Figure 2.1. Data Analysis and Coding Sequence



Stage 1. During this first stage, I reviewed the interview transcripts and identified key themes related to actors' a) role and identity, b) forms of knowledge, and c) practices -- all as aspects of the larger conceptual inquiry into how and why localization occurs.

Stage 2. After tentatively mapping the dominant themes in the participant narratives, I first began to compare and cluster themes across the narratives and other data sources before then turning to the literature to help me make sense of the relationship among and between the themes that emerged in Stage 1. For instance, for Chapter V, I compared the theme of the importance of teacher-student relationships with observation data on teachers' classroom practice. This led to my finding on hybridity. For Chapter III, I analyzed the narratives of the Internationals by asking two questions: first, how do they frame their work, and second, what is transferred through them (i.e. through their roles and identities, their beliefs, and their practice). I then compared the dominant concerns and ideas that I identified across the narratives with each other and focused on issues such as autonomy and sustainability, normative beliefs about educational development, and critiques of policy implementation. Coding and comparing the narratives in this way led to my assertion that the composite of their expertise was both a means and an end of international educational transfer.

In Chapter IV, I followed a similar process by focusing on the roles, beliefs, and practices of educational professionals. This preliminary analysis led to my understanding of them as “in-betweeners.” By coding the narratives for “in-betweenness,” I then derived the other dominant themes discussed in the chapter such as the role of time, historical legacies, culture, the issue of political will, anger and accountability, and the gaps between various institutions such as the government and schools. During this second intensive stage of coding and writing, I began to consult the literature as well to help me interpret the emerging codes.

Stage 3. I then turned back to the data once again. As I wrote draft chapters and went back and forth between the analysis and the writing, I began to cluster and configure the

dominant themes and codes in relation to each other. This is how I developed the various conceptual schema that I present (such as the tables in Chapter V). During this stage, I also interpreted the various themes through the lens of core concepts from the literature and ultimately began to link these ideas back to my over-arching questions on “how” and “why” localization occurs. Here, Scott’s (1998) construct of experiential knowledge or “metis,” Hall’s (2004) and Sutton and Levinson’s (2001) constructs of situated practice, Cuban’s (1984) notion of “situationally constrained choice,” and Barnett and Finnemore’s (2004) analysis of expertise and authority were especially helpful in the theoretical interpretation and synthesis of my findings.

Taken together, these analytic and theoretical methods of data analysis enabled me to produce a more data-rich, theoretically nuanced, readable, and trustworthy final product, as I discuss below.

Ensuring Research Quality

While concepts of validity, reliability, and generalizability are typically associated with traditional positivist approaches to research, feminist, qualitative and constructivist researchers are also concerned with ensuring the integrity and quality of their work. There is of course much debate about how best to do this and still maintain consistency with one’s epistemological paradigm. As Donna Haraway contends, this approach entails situating one’s self and one’s research, articulating a coherent and theoretically grounded framework for the collection and interpretation of data, and fulfilling “a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world” (1988, p. 579).

I have employed numerous strategies in order to establish reliability and trustworthiness. Following Creswell (2003), my research has included important components such as member-checking, peer review, and writing reflexive memos. By explicitly discussing emerging themes in my research with participants, my research assistants, fellow doctoral students, select faculty members, and a wider academic audience, I have benefited from insider and outside viewpoints on my research. These discussions have introduced alternative ways of looking at my preliminary findings and unearthing assumptions that should be interrogated. Exploring alternative interpretations of the data also helped to identify gaps in the research account and to introduce other literatures that were helpful in making sense of the data. As noted before, I also followed the guidelines for the Cornell Internal Review Board and gained Human Subjects approval for my research. As suggested, I have presented my research methodology and findings publicly to allow for interaction and criticism and to enhance the integrity of my work, and I plan to continue to do so. I believe these steps will go a long way in establishing the reliability and trustworthiness of my research.

Qualitative researchers Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) also argue that “attention to context and the local level is not optional but obligatory in order to generate trustworthy knowledge” (p. 2). For others, the qualitative researcher/theorist is a “bricoleur” that must navigate “between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms” in order to consider the research problem and analyze data from multiple vantage points (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4). Similar to the practice of “triangulation,” Denzin and Lincoln argue that engaging diverse and divergent viewpoints contributes to the breadth and depth of a study and enriches data collection and interpretation, providing an alternative form of “validity” (1998, p. 4).

The ethnographic practice of extended engagement with a research site also contributes to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research. In my case, I have been working with the Albanian educational community each year since August 2003. As LeCompte and Preissle (2003) note, “Participant observers use their long-term field residence to assure ample opportunity to observe and record salient data and make sound decisions about what to exclude and include” (p. 200).

This long-term presence also facilitates the breadth and depth of data collection, which in turn contributes to greater transferability and the possibility of “analytic generalization” (Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p. 11). Stevick and Levinson assert, “Analytic generalization uses the particulars of a given case to ‘test, refine or modify some theory or theoretical idea, concept or model’” (Schwandt 1997, p. 58 quoted in Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p 11-12). On the other hand, “case-to-case transfer asks the researcher to provide enough information about a particular case and its context that readers could make a reasonable, informed judgment about whether certain conclusions or practices would apply in another setting” (Schwandt, 1997, pp. 58-59 cited in Stevick and Levinson, 2007, p. 12). While individual case studies are not designed to be generalizable in the same way that an experimental study would be, case-to-case transferability is a useful possibility and a goal for my research.

Similarly, Schofield (2002) argues that qualitative researchers refer to the “‘fit’ between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study. This conceptualization makes thick descriptions crucial, since without them one does not have the information necessary for an informed judgment about the issue of fit” (Schofield, 2002, pp. 198-199). Again, because I intended to generate an understanding of

the localization process in Albania, I followed these strategies for ensuring, to the degree possible, transferability and trustworthiness in my research.

I am confident that I have maintained these standards of ethical, responsible, and trustworthy research. As a result of my extended visits and prolonged commitment, I achieved a level of trust and familiarity with the local and international educational community there. I received letters of support for my research and the verbal support of several key figures in the Albanian education community. And ultimately, I have pledged to share, in whatever ways possible, my research results with them.

Chapter III

Global Frames, Local Aims:

International Educational Transfer and Reform in Albania, 1992-2010

This chapter explores the internationalization of educational reform in Albania during the first two decades of post-communist democratization. The first decade was a period of high hopes coupled with frenzied international attention, as well as social and political upheaval, intense economic difficulty, and increasing popular cynicism towards the government's lack of transparency and accountability. The diverse and eclectic international interventions that occurred during this time were situated within a broader policy context both internationally and within Albania. The initial section of this chapter thus gives an overview of the local conditions that gave rise to a range of international educational interventions in these early years following the collapse of the authoritarian regime.

Through an analysis of these various interventions, two dominant themes emerge. For the most part, international discourses of education reform during the late 1990s and into the new Millennium promoted a model of education for the global knowledge economy. Within this economic frame, democratic citizenship education was envisioned as a model for building the capacity of students to participate in a liberal form of democracy and succeed in the market-based global economy through mastery of particular "key competencies". Teachers were positioned as "lifelong learners" and "knowledge workers" increasingly bound by standardized sets of teaching competencies. Thus, in the second section of this chapter, I discuss the ideological and programmatic cross-currents of international educational policy that circulated during this period. In particular, I discuss how competencies came to be conceptualized by three

significant international educational policy actors: the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Council of Europe. The two dominant international discourses of education for democratic citizenship and the global knowledge economy can also be linked to the emerging priorities of Albanian national education policies during these first two post-communist decades. Thus, through a brief analysis of select national policies, I show how Albanian educational policy has become nested within these common global discursive frames.

In the third section of this chapter, I examine the importation of global educational models through the perspective of international actors involved in the process. Through an analysis of four narratives, I explored the following questions: *How do internationals (explicitly and implicitly) frame their experience of providing educational assistance to the local context? How do they themselves become vehicles of international transfer, and what is transferred through them?* I found that there were three main ways in which these internationals framed their provision of international educational services. The first was through their awareness of their own role and identity as an international expert. The second frame, or mode of transfer, was in their application of experiential and specialized forms of knowledge based on their international work experiences, professional training, and disciplinary backgrounds. The third frame that I identified was the exercise of their authority, particularly through their communication of critical, analytical, and normative views on a number of issues including the following: critique of the local cultural and political context; assessment of their relationship with key local actors; identification and analysis of gaps between policy talk and implementation; advocacy of particular goals and principles of educational reform; critique of international educational transfer; and the development of nascent theories about why borrowed policies failed, as well as

what would make them succeed. I argue that by framing their experience in these particular ways, internationals become vehicles of international educational transfer, and thus, their beliefs, analyses, and understandings of “the local” constitute a significant part of what is transferred. In other words, embedded in the umbrella construct of “international expertise,” the identities, forms of knowledge, and professional practices of international actors form an amalgam which then serves as a powerful mechanism of international transfer and localization.

Section I

Views from the Inside Out: Local Conditions and International Educational Interventions in Albania, 1992-2010

The years directly following the fall of communism introduced myriad international organizations of all kinds into the Albanian landscape. The needs and demands for educational borrowing were strong; the government sought international legitimacy, membership in the dominant international organizations, recognition by powerful western governments, technical assistance for market reform, and of course, international investment. According to a leading Albanian sociologist, Fatos Tarifa, during these early years, most schools had “worn out classrooms, scanty furniture, broken windows, lack of paper and textbooks, not to mention the total absence of teaching equipment such as calculators, overhead projectors, audio-visual aids, computers or copying machines” (Kloep and Tarifa, 1994, p. 170). Furthermore, due to weak infrastructure and a lack of effective public and private modes of transportation, teachers often had to walk “up to ten miles a day to and from their schools” (Kloep and Tarifa, 1994, p. 170).

Conditions such as these caught the attention of international donors in the early days of what was known as a democratic transition period¹⁷.

Politicians, professionals, and educators alike sought assistance from abroad; a select few were chosen to travel on grants such as the U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright and Ron Brown Fellowships to directly learn and experience American models of democracy and education. Others worked with internationals at home in Albania. For example, the Soros Foundation was one of the most important initial donors for educational reform in Albania. Focusing on investment in education for an “open society”, Soros sponsored the creation of the AEDP (Albanian Educational Development Project) and ran projects and programs to train teachers, improve school infrastructure, teach democratic citizenship, civics, and legal education, create debate clubs, and infuse models based on Karl Popper’s critical thinking at all levels of schooling (Bassler, 2005; Evans, 2003).

A copious amount of donor funding flowed into Albania in the early years of post-communist democracy building and throughout the next decade. As I discuss later in this chapter and Chapter IV, many local and international actors attest to the lack of coordination and coherence in these early days of democratization¹⁸. Far from being complementary, the range, scope, focus, and organizational structure underpinning these various interventions were often perceived as unclear, inconsistent, and unsustainable. While mapping the full cacophony of international actors during these first decades of attempted reform is not possible here, Table 3.1

¹⁷ The notion of the “transition period” is contested and has, for some, outgrown its usefulness. For example, Carothers (2002) argues that we have reached “the end of the transition paradigm.”

¹⁸ This situation has changed in the wake of the Paris Declaration and the creation of a new Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination in Albania. According to their 2008 Progress Report, “The long-term sustainable and balanced economic development as well as the integration of the Albanian economy into the EU, necessitates achievement of the maximum efficiency from domestic and external invested funds. Based on the principles of the Paris Declaration, both Government and donors are striving towards the ownership of national institutions over the development processes, harmonization with national development strategies, and synchronization of cooperation with donors” (p. 6).

below offers a partial view of the organizational footprint of international involvement in Albanian education.

Table 3.1. Partial Mapping of International Educational Assistance in Albania, 1990-2005

(see Appendix 1 for more complete listing)

| Organization | Program/Project Focus | Category of Assistance |
|--|--|--|
| Albanian Center for Human Rights (local organization with international funding) | Partner with Institute for Pedagogical Studies to develop HRE program focused on curriculum development, teacher training at pre-service and in-service, and national education policy/strategy development. Integration of HRE themes into all aspects of education – particularly in civic education (1993-2001). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Curriculum / Textbook development, re-printing ◆ Teacher Training / Capacity Building ◆ Project piloting ◆ Programming for HRE (conference organized) |
| Council of Europe | Conducted assessment on education for democratic citizenship; provides materials on European educational standards and initiatives; curricular materials on human rights education, tolerance, and respect for diversity; promotes sites of citizenship and school twinning; focus on European dimension in education (after Albania became member in 1995) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides standards for Democratic Citizenship Education/European dimension ◆ Stock-taking ◆ Resources provided |
| Helsinki Committee | Sponsorship for Human Rights Education – resulted in development of student activity book for grade 1-8 in HRE. Booklets focused on children’s rights in the Albanian context, rights and responsibilities, student participation, critical thinking, and non-discrimination. Booklets were distributed and piloted, and regional trainings held reaching teachers, students, and local education authorities. | Financial support; Resource/curriculum development |
| Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) | Completed Thematic Review of national policies for education (2002); PISA project for national standards; Priority issues include: Stability, Access, Equity, Quality, Efficiency, and Governance. | Stock-taking Analysis of education governance Policy Recommendations |
| Soros Foundation/ Open Society/ AEDP (Albanian Education Development Project) | Teacher training; support for local NGO network in education reform; support for school reconstruction and community development; former projects in democratic citizenship education, human rights education, and law education in at least 13 districts; Cluster school projects; support for regional SEE educational network; Step by Step preschool project; conducted “Conflict Resolution and Mediation in Schools” project after 1997 crisis; Teacher education program “Kualida”; Education governance and decentralization assistance. General focus on quality education and open society – critical thinking, education for democratic citizenship, and capacity building throughout educational system. | Capacity building Curriculum development Resource publication Teacher training School building and reconstruction Education system reform |
| United Nations Development Project (UNDP) | Implementing technology in schools in Northern Albania; worked with “Safer Albania” on a disarmament education and peaceful culture project in four pilot | Infrastructure development Training/Capacity |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | schools in Tirana and Shkodra; education to link police and schools and build community security; issues included preventing crime, prostitution, human trafficking, blood feud, & use of drugs; e-schools project. | building Awareness raising Policy recommendations |
| United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) | Programs and curriculum development in human rights education; translation of UNESCO educational publications; worked with the Albanian Human Rights Center and the Center for the Rights of the Child; developed teacher manuals; worked with MOES to discuss HRE themes at government level; “Democracy in Action” school-based project. | Curriculum development Resource development Networking Teacher training (piloted) |
| United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) | Projects on Global Education in 14 primary schools (in 12 districts), expanding to reach 30 schools including grades 1-4; Education Policy Reform assistance to conform with EFA - focus on school management; developing training centers for students and teachers for human rights education; program on “Student Learning Achievements” also within EFA framework; long-term interest in teacher training especially on topic of minimum standard learning goals and critical thinking; focus on child-friendly schools and quality education; Also involved in Gender Task Force on Education with State and civil society reps. EEEP project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Policy development (School Management and Gender) ◆ Curriculum development ◆ Structural reform of schools ◆ Standard setting – policy recommendations. Pilot program development Teacher training/ capacity building |
| World Bank | Development of comprehensive education reform strategy for EFA fast-track initiative (towards MDGs); school reconstruction/rehabilitation; procurement of textbooks (privatizing Textbook distribution and publishing/printing and re-printing); education management information systems (database development); policy design and management; Restructuring of the Ministry and IPS; assessment and examinations; focus on basic and secondary education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education financing ◆ Restructuring of Ministry/IPS ◆ Policy Recommendations/ Education Strategy Development |

As we see in Table 3.1, a wide range of international actors participated in educational intervention throughout the first two decades of the post-communist period. These actors ranged from international and regional organizations to non-governmental and voluntary organizations along with some bilateral donors. The levels and type of interventions were diverse. Some agencies focused on technical assistance at the school level, while others focused on influencing the government at the policy level. The content of these projects also varied – while some developed stand-alone curricular units on special issues like human rights, human trafficking, or disarmament education, other projects focused on capacity building with teachers, trainers, and

communities. The financial details and specific timelines of these heterogeneous interventions also varied significantly although this information is not included above. Very little information on the sustainability of project results was available during the course of this research¹⁹.

Ultimately, it is difficult to evaluate the lasting impact of these diverse interventions.

Nonetheless, for the sake of the analysis at hand, we can draw some tentative conclusions about the discursive role played by these various international and institutional actors. Taken together, these early educational interventions represent at least six thematic categories.

Table 3.2. Examples of Discursive Categories, Main Actors, and System Level of International Educational Assistance to Albania

| Discursive categories of international assistance | Main actors | Levels of intervention |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Security and Stabilization</i> | OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) | Intergovernmental: policy |
| <i>Open Society</i> | Soros Foundation / AEDP | Education system: mostly school level training and programming |
| <i>Democracy Promotion</i> | USAID/US government, National Democratic Institute, World Learning | Mixed: government, political parties, municipal leaders |
| <i>Internationalization; economic and political modernization and development</i> | UN agencies, World Bank | Intergovernmental: policy, technical assistance, and direct assistance (pilots) |
| <i>Europeanization</i> | European Union, Council of Europe, European Commission | Intergovernmental: policy and technical assistance |
| <i>Transnational norms: human rights and poverty alleviation</i> | Save the Children, CARE, World Vision, Helsinki Foundation | School level: Direct projects in schools and communities with some policy consultation |

In each of the discursive categories listed above, particular actors introduced their own models of educational intervention to assist and improve the Albanian educational system.

¹⁹ As of 2010, however, a website has been created to track donor coordination in Albania. See <http://www.aidharmonisation.org.al/> for an updated and expanded matrix of donor support.

Furthermore, the various actors, operating under no pretense of coordination during the early years prior to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, introduced these various discourses of change and development at various levels of the Albanian educational system including the school and community levels to the level of the national Ministry.

These discourses were also introduced and circulated through a number of institutional and societal mechanisms (such as the training of teachers, the development of new curricula, the construction of new schools, the restructuring of educational laws, and the re-organization of educational financing), while simultaneously transporting a number of underlying “policy rationalities” (Fimyar, 2011, p. 67). Based on a Foucault-inspired analysis, policy rationalities are “the formations beneath discourses, which constrain the content of what is said and thought in a particular area of social practice (i.e. educational policy-making) in a given period of time. [...] Rationalities can be understood as ‘conditions of possibility’ for discourses to emerge, and be accepted or rejected in a particular context” (Fimyar, 2011, p. 66). For instance, in her analysis of educational reform in post-communist Ukraine during a similar time period as the present study, Fimyar identified three dominant policy rationalities: national and state-building; comparison and critique; and “catching-up Europeanization” (Fimyar, 2011, p. 64). These rationalities fueled the creation of a range of policy discourses similar to those identified above.

Comparing the interventions of various international organizations, along with their strategic discourses and embedded rationalities, is in some ways like comparing apples and oranges, because the context of their institutional backing, the priorities they embrace, and the modality and scope of their interventions present a diverse spectrum of alternatives. However, the point here is that these discourses were, in most cases, simultaneously introduced with the result that local policy-makers often faced a number of competing international priorities,

demands, interests, and indeed, rationalities (or logics) in the process of crafting their national education policy (in addition to a number of competing *domestic* interests as well). With all these international cooks in the proverbial Albanian kitchen, coupled with domestic tumult and turnover in the Education Ministry and central government, it is not at all surprising that the development of a comprehensive strategy for pre-university education reform took nearly two decades to be published.

Nonetheless, by the second decade of this post-communist period, the diverse range of international educational discourses began to narrow and converge. Thus, in order to better understand the processes of foreign educational assistance and localization in Albania, we must first examine the prevailing international, transnational, and global discursive trends in educational policy that served to frame their national policy-craft. As I elaborate in the section below, these global cross-currents had a significant and, I argue, constitutive role in the formation of Albanian education policy during the first two decades of post-communist reform.

Section II

Viewing the National Through the Global: Ideological and Programmatic Cross-Currents of International Educational Policy Sampled in Albanian Policies, 1992-2010

An overview of the role of key international actors in educational policy. In their comprehensive overview of international and transnational policy actors in education, Mundy and Ghali (2009) provide a detailed historical account of the ideological and programmatic cross-currents of international educational policy since World War II. They first draw a distinction between the policy roles played by “development focused” intergovernmental

organizations, such as UN agencies and INGOs, that often emphasized the primacy of rights and norms for social development versus the more instrumental economic view of education for human capital development that was circulated by the World Bank. Despite this divergence of approach, however, during the initial post-war period through the late 1980s, “nation-states came to view the purposes of educational multilateralism in much more instrumental terms, either as an opportunity to advance national economic and geopolitical interests (as in bilateral aid programs or through the OECD’s benchmarking initiatives) or as a collective investment in human capital expected to produce the levels of economic growth and modernization in the developing world that Western governments have long argued is essential to the political stability of the larger world system” (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 721).

The extensive influence of the “Washington consensus” on international education also led to increased international attention to the economic functions of educational systems and the adoption of measures related to the economic efficiency, competitiveness, and overall productivity of national education systems (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 721). To these ends, the World Bank in particular came to adopt “a standard menu of reform policies” aimed at decentralization, rationalization, standardized testing, and the expansion of private sector educational services (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 722).

After 2000, the mandate and discursive foci of the World Bank shifted as it instituted the “Fast Track Initiative” (FTI) to assist and support developing countries in reaching their obligations to the multilateral “Education for All” (EFA) framework. Through the FTI process, the World Bank “acts as a global fund for achieving universal access to education and sets benchmarks for educational quality and expenditure” (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 722). With this new role came a corresponding “web of new expectations” and discourses embedded in WB

policies such as their increasing emphasis on issues ranging from equity, minority inclusion, and enhancing democracy to social cohesion in post-Soviet countries (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 722). This web of institutional priorities and expectations adopted at WB headquarters has had a significant influence on the formation of Albanian educational reform policies.

Alongside the expanding international influence of the World Bank, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) has also exerted a significant influence on the development of education policy in Albania and around the world, particularly through the development of the cross-national PISA (Program for International Student Assessment). According to Mundy and Ghali,

Both the PISA program and the annual *Education at a Glance* (launched by the OECD in 1992), mark an important shift in the type of policy role being played by intergovernmental organizations. From a somewhat benign forum for information exchange and cross-national learning in education, the OECD has emerged at the center of much more muscular efforts to compare educational performance across nations. (2009, p. 723)

Through the development of standard indicators for educational performance, the OECD is at the forefront of what world culture theorists assert is an increasing convergence and standardization of educational policy and institutional development across diverse nation-states. As I discuss below, this endorsement of standardization occurs at both normative and structural levels through the creation of “key competencies”.

Finally, a third significant international educational policy actor is the European Union (EU). The EU has “steadily expanded its efforts to harmonize the structure and content of the educational systems” of its member states, accession countries, and aspiring member states such as Albania (Mundy and Ghali, 2009, p. 723). Elsewhere I have argued that the EU and its related organizations, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, play a significant role in

both policy “harmonization” and strategically promoting a constructed sense of European identity or “imaginary” in Albania and Moldova (Gardinier and Worden, 2011). However, I agree with Mundy and Ghali that “more empirical research is needed on whether the EU’s main impact is in harmonizing educational provision for economic competitiveness, or attaching its member citizens to a new form of social democratic citizenship that transcends the nation-state” (2009, p. 724). What is evident in the present study is that both of these discourses –one associated with global competitiveness and the other, democratic citizenship as a form of European (and Western) belonging– are increasingly salient in the Albanian educational policy context.

The use of competencies in World Bank, OECD, and Council of Europe models. At the intersection of these two dominant international discourses in educational policy we can locate a particular conceptual form: competencies. Competencies are a unit of analysis for educational measurement, attainment, and proficiency. In the models of these international organizations, learning and teaching practices are comprised of an array of core or key competencies that enable experts to plan, measure, and evaluate educational attainment. For the World Bank, competencies are at the heart of teaching and learning for the 21st century knowledge economy; they are the building blocks of human and social capital.

In their 2005 policy agenda for global secondary education, the World Bank²⁰ argued that the global trend to support investment in primary education was no longer enough; instead,

²⁰ This report was published by the World Bank and no individual authors were listed. However, in the acknowledgements, a team led by Ernesto Cuadra, Juan Manuel Moreno, Luis Crouch, and several others was cited. The names of individuals who provided expert consultation and advice were also listed. These individuals represented international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, the International Institute for Educational Planning, USAID, the Korean Education Development Institute, as well as university professors of education and several Ministers of Education. I include this point here to

secondary education must be developed as well, for it “provides a specific set of competencies and skills that enable students to participate in the knowledge society” (WB, 2005a, p. xix).

According to a Senior VP in the World Bank, Jean-Louis Sarbib, “Secondary education is the highway between primary schooling, tertiary education, and the labor market. Its ability to connect the different destinations and to take young people where they want to go in life is crucial. Secondary education can act as a bottleneck, constricting the expansion of educational attainment and opportunity—or it can open up pathways for students’ advancement” (WB, 2005a, p. xii). Through the development of competencies, secondary education also builds social capital in the form of citizenship. For Mr. Sarbib, “Providing quality secondary education to young people [...] can also build tolerance and trust among a group of people whose informed citizenship is crucial to the formation and maintenance of cohesive, open societies” (WB, 2005a, p. xii).

Yet despite its crucial role in social and economic development, secondary education worldwide suffers from a significant deficit. “There is a gap between what is currently being taught in secondary schools and the knowledge and skills required if countries, firms, and individuals are to be competitive” (WB, 2005a, p. xxi). Thus, in the logic of the lead agency for investment in social and economic development, the need for competitiveness in the global knowledge economy necessitates the development of particular competencies in secondary education.

We must ask then, if learning boils down to students’ acquisition and mastery of key competencies, what is the role of the teacher in the 21st century knowledge economy? Teachers too must develop competencies for this new era. However, according to the World Bank agenda,

highlight the multiplicity of voices that almost always feeds into what can look like a monolithic organizational platform.

“there is a profound mismatch between learning needs, competencies, and skills demanded from students in the knowledge society and the teaching skills of secondary teachers after their passage through teacher training colleges and in-service training programs” (WB, 2005a, p. xxi).

A closer look reveals some of the details of this mismatch:

In the contemporary knowledge economy, knowledge management is seen as the key to the flexibility of operations, the training and professional development of employees, and even the overall productivity of an institution. The implicit challenge is that knowledge of teaching is for the most part tacit, difficult to articulate and systematize, and strictly practical and context based. These characteristics reinforce the traditional isolation of teachers and schools, making the transfer and full utilization of knowledge very difficult. In short, teacher education institutions, schools as organizations, and education systems in general are still very far from meeting the needs of a knowledge-management society. (WB, 2005a, p. 107-108)

To bridge this significant gap, the World Bank provides a complex framework for the competencies that teachers need to become “lifelong learners”, “professionals” and “knowledge workers” in the global economy (WB, 2005a, p. 109). Firstly, they define the necessary teaching competencies as capacities to “mobilize a variety of cognitive resources to deal with a specific type of teaching situation”; thus, “teaching competencies and skills integrate and articulate cognitive resources that are relevant to a given situation. They are constructed through training and through daily practice in the classroom” and are common across grade levels, subjects, and disciplines (WB, 2005a, p. 107).

To map these general teaching competencies for the global knowledge economy, the World Bank advocated a “roadmap” for secondary school teachers which included such competencies as “acting critically as a professional, interpreting the objects of knowledge or culture in performing one’s functions”; “evaluating student progress in learning the subject content”; “adapting teaching to student diversity”; integrating information and communication technologies into teaching; and such social skills as “cooperating with school staff, parents, and

various social agents to achieve the school's educational targets" (WB, 2005a, pp. 234-238). This global "roadmap" of general teacher competencies is then transferred to particular national policy contexts and used explicitly to frame local policies for teacher development and professionalization. In this way, the World Bank actively translates its prescriptive norms and economically driven rationality into the digestible and transferable unit of "teacher competencies" which, in turn, provide the means to certify teachers as "lifelong learners" and "professionals" in the global knowledge economy.

With extensive input from the World Bank at the country level, such norms and standards have actively framed the reform efforts at the Albanian Ministry of Education. As one of the first international organizations to establish a presence in Albania during the post-communist years, the World Bank has invested millions of dollars and conducted several studies on the Albanian educational system. A recent report found that while there were a few reasons to be hopeful, Albania still has a long way to go to meet international targets. For example, a World Bank assessment in 2005 found that, "despite significant attempts during the past several years, few structural reforms in the education sector have succeeded in addressing the need to operate with more limited budgets and to deliver education services more efficiently and effectively" (WB, 2005b, p. 38). Furthermore, enrollment rates for upper secondary school declined dramatically throughout the first two post-communist decades. In 2001, another WB report concluded that, "the most salient and worrisome development in Albanian education in the 1990s has been a strong and steady reduction in enrollment – and enrollment rates – at all levels of education except tertiary. The number of students enrolled in 1998 was 15 percent below enrollment in 1989. Whatever the reasons, this trend, if it is not reversed, will seriously undermine the productive capacity of the whole economy" (Palomba and Vodopivec, 2001, p. 49). Thus, as the

World Bank's analysis of global trends would predict, Albanian education is lagging behind most other OECD countries and has huge gaps to fill in order to perform effectively in the global knowledge economy.

In addition to the prescriptive role played by the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has also played an increasingly important role in the international educational policy sphere in Albania and elsewhere. In particular, the administration of the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) cross-national testing regime represents the main instrument of the OECD's growing influence in this domain. According to the PISA 2009 Assessment Framework document, the goals of the PISA are multi-dimensional and idealistic:

Comparative international assessments can extend and enrich the national picture by providing a larger context within which to interpret national performance. They can show what is possible in education, in terms of the quality of educational outcomes as well as in terms of equity in the distribution of learning opportunities. They can support setting policy targets by establishing measurable goals achieved by other systems and help to build trajectories for reform. They can also help countries work out their relative strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress. (OECD, 2009, p. 9)

Once again, the primary measure for determining and assessing these goals are sets of key competencies in reading, mathematics, and science.

Like the WB roadmap for teachers, The PISA Assessment Framework is based on an economically driven rationality that is generalized across countries. Furthermore, the PISA justifies this homogenous approach to educational measurement by relying on principles of scientific validity and reliability to certify the test structure and implementation. Global discourses of "science" and "expertise" provide legitimacy and credibility for the merit of PISA's design, as evident in this excerpt from an OECD policy document:

Decisions about the scope and nature of the assessments and the background information to be collected are made by leading experts in participating [Western European] countries, and are steered jointly by governments on the basis of shared, policy-driven interests. Substantial efforts and resources are devoted to achieving cultural and linguistic breadth and balance in the assessment materials. Stringent quality assurance mechanisms are applied in translation, sampling and data collection. As a consequence, the results of PISA have a high degree of validity and reliability, and can significantly improve understanding of the outcomes of education in the world's economically most developed countries, as well as in a growing number of countries at earlier stages of economic development. (OECD, 2009, p. 13)

In sum, the reliability of the PISA as a credible and important source of cross-national educational data relies almost exclusively on the use of *international expertise*, a construct examined later in this chapter. In light of this fact, if we are interested in unearthing the global frames that guide the local data collection aims of the PISA, we must examine the implicit norms, underlying beliefs, conceptual foundations, and the epistemological orientation of the experts that defined the “key competencies” of the PISA assessment.

Because of the wide adoption and influential role of these key competencies in shaping policies for educational reform worldwide, it is important to critically examine *how* and *why* they were selected and prioritized. The OECD is somewhat transparent about their own purposes in developing the PISA framework of which the key competencies are a central component. They state the following on their website: “To date, the major impetus in OECD countries for efforts in the area of key competencies has come from the business sector and from employers” (www.oecd.org/edu/statistics/deseco). However, they assert that beyond a purely economic viewpoint, key competencies also contribute to wider social goals such as social cohesion, participation in democracy, and “strengthening human rights and autonomy as counterweights to increasing global inequality of opportunities and increasing individual marginalization”

(www.oecd.org/edu/statistics/deseco). The normative aspects of key competences are thus fairly clear.

At the same time, the OECD recognizes that defining and selecting key competencies is an intricate and essentially political matter that should draw on well-developed conceptual, theoretical, and scientific foundations. To this end, in late 1997, the OECD created the *DeSeCo Project* – an interdisciplinary and policy-oriented research program carried out under the leadership of Switzerland. The *DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations) Project* was based on a consultative process among researchers, experts, and policy-makers over the span of a decade. Highlighting their own awareness of the sensitivity and complexity of their task, the authors of the 2001 DeSeCo background paper noted that, “The underlying assumption of the DeSeCo Program is that defining and selecting key competencies relevant for individuals and societies is at the same time an ethical, a scientific, and a political issue. First, no frame of reference is neutral. One’s underlying vision of the world, including assumptions about society and individuals and about what a successful life implies affects the identification of key competencies” (OECD, 2001, pp. 3).

In addition to their understanding of the political nature of defining competencies that would be translated into national education policies in diverse countries, the experts of the DeSeCo Project also recognized that “individual characteristics such as gender, age, and social status, and aspects of the social environment such as culture and national context influence the forms that key competencies described at the abstract level take in specific contexts” (OECD, 2001, pp. 4). In this way, they conceded that localization of the implicit norms of the PISA structure would almost certainly occur in some form. They pointed to the need for local policymakers to use the scientific findings in particularly strategic ways. Thus, paradoxically,

while designing a universal set of core competencies for the OECD PISA program, the intellectual architects of the DeSeCo Project concurrently recognized that maintaining objective and universal norms of measurement was not actually possible given the inherently political nature of the project. They concluded that “defining and selecting a valuable, useful and legitimate set of key competencies are ultimately the result of a political process, in which researchers are partners among other constituents and stakeholders such as policy makers, practitioners, and representatives of the economic and social world” (OECD, 2001, pp. 4).

Nonetheless, despite these challenges, the DeSeCo Project ultimately identified three inter-connected categories for the key competencies that were to be measured by the PISA assessment. These three broad categories were the following:

- Using tools such as language and technology interactively;
- Interacting in heterogeneous groups; and
- Taking responsibility for managing one’s own life, situating one’s life in the broader social context, and acting autonomously.

As noted above, both the derivation and the interpretation of these categories took place in Western European country contexts although the PISA is now conducted in a much wider array of countries. According to the DeSeCo Executive Summary (2005), “In most OECD countries, value is placed on flexibility, entrepreneurship and personal responsibility.[...] At the centre of the framework of key competencies is the ability of individuals to think for themselves as an expression of moral and intellectual maturity, and to take responsibility for their learning and for their actions” (p. 8). Along these lines, an individual’s capacity to be “reflective” was a core value embedded in the competencies. “Reflectiveness implies the use of metacognitive skills (thinking about thinking), creative abilities and taking a critical stance. [...] This requires

individuals to reach a level of social maturity that allows them to distance themselves from social pressures, take different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their actions” (OECD, 2005, p. 9). Thus, far from neutral or universal, the core values embedded in the key competencies measured by the PISA explicitly reflected the specific cultural norms of the Western European experts who defined and selected them.

Returning then to the question of the underlying conceptual foundations and epistemological assumptions that fueled the definition and selection of these key competencies, we can identify a number of core beliefs in operation. First, learners are understood as autonomous individuals who must differentiate themselves from their social identities as well as from their own subjective thoughts in order to develop their ability to be critical, reflective, independent, responsible, and mature. Second, learning that counts for success in the global economy requires the interactive use of tools such as language and technology. Specifically, students must critically reflect on the “nature of information itself – its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural, and even ideological context and impact” (OECD, 2005, p. 11). Further, they must “relate the possibilities embedded in technological tools to their own circumstances and goals” (OECD, 2005, p. 11). Finally, learners should be future-oriented, optimistic, goal oriented, and extremely self-aware.

Thus from executive board rooms, elite think tanks, and the headquarters of an international organization in Switzerland, through the articulation of PISA’s key competencies, the “universal” values and underlying concepts that will frame the curricular content and learning goals of Albanian secondary school students flow through the well lubricated pipeline of international expertise. As we will see later in this chapter and in Chapters IV and V, the everyday contexts and sets of beliefs that frame the knowledge and experiences of Albanian

students and teachers are predicated on radically different foundations such as collective responsibility, familial proximity, inter-dependence, assimilation of information rather than interrogation of it, and a reliance on experiences in the past and present (much more than an imagined future) to guide one's choices.

A third international actor, the Council of Europe, also prescribes the development of “competences” for teachers in the area of democratic citizenship and human rights education (EDC/HRE). Though a thorough analysis of the Council of Europe's framework for teachers' competences is not possible here, a brief discussion is merited. First, the EDC project of the Council of Europe is based on cooperation between staff in Strasbourg offices and teachers and trainers throughout Europe, including Southeastern Europe. While the Council promotes similar sets of normative principles and “European values” for citizenship education, the decentralized use of expertise is significantly different from the economically driven competency-based programs of the World Bank and the OECD.

Secondly, the overall tone of the material is entirely different and more “user-friendly”. For example, the Introduction to a teacher's guide on EDC/HRE competences notes the following:

The competences outlined in this document are not compulsory. They are intended to help teachers and training providers and not to scare them. Competences are not to be feared (or to be used as a stick by authorities). The spirit in which these competences have been designed is one of teacher empowerment. The aim is to support and enhance teaching and learning methods in EDC/HRE and not to judge. The ideas and guidance outlined here might be used fully or partially as teacher training material. We anticipate flexibility and adaptation in their usage in different national contexts, as we acknowledge that countries incorporate EDC/HRE into their national education systems in many different ways. (CoE, 2009, p. 13)

Building on this tone, the manual does not lock in a narrow or even a particular definition of competence. Rather, the text alludes to different frameworks such as those similar to the

OECD model above and a UNESCO formulation of “situated competencies” that departs from de-contextualized and abstract notions and embraces instead “the competent action of a person in situation” (UNESCO qtd. in CoE, 2009, p. 14).

Despite this democratic tone, however, the Council of Europe’s model for EDC/HRE teacher competences, like the competencies of the World Bank and the OECD, nonetheless embodies a set of norms, “action-based skills,” and “European values” that are to be adopted by all. These include “preparing and empowering people for living and acting in democratic society,” “encouraging and supporting learners to become active, informed and responsible citizens” who are “aware of their rights and responsibilities,” informed about the world, concerned about others, “active in their communities,” “articulate in their opinions,” and “capable of having an influence on the world” (CoE, 2009, p. 13).

According to the Council of Europe, the teacher’s work of preparing such active and aware young citizens can be achieved through the mastery of 15 competences ranging from knowledge and understanding to forms of planning, management and assessment, partnerships with communities, and participatory approaches to implementation and evaluation. Ultimately, teachers are advised to “consider the basis of their [academic] subjects, approach them critically, connect with other areas and domains such as citizenship, and explore their social utility, relevance and relationship with contemporary culture, promoting tolerance, equality issues, diversity as a collective asset and respect for and development of human rights” (CoE, 2009, p. 16). Thus, despite an intentionally “participatory” tone and approach, the Council of Europe’s model for EDC/HRE teacher competences, like other international “roadmaps” for teachers, sets extremely high expectations predicated on a range of culturally-specific norms and assumptions. As I discuss in Chapter V, Albanian teachers had their own complex ways of conceptualizing

and enacting their subject knowledge and pedagogical practice, which in turn influenced *if* and *how* normative Western ideals related to diversity, equality, human rights, and tolerance were taught.

Sampling global discourses in Albanian education policy. The Albanian educational system has been in the process of reform since the fall of the communist regime and the outset of democratic elections in the early 1990s. What began with the removal of ideological and militarized content in school texts and curricula evolved into a complete overhaul of the educational system, including its financing, governance, and curricular content. In the early years of the post-communist period, the World Bank, European Union, and Soros Foundation provided 30 million USD to build the capacity of educators and foster the reconstruction of schools –many of which were dilapidated from years of neglect and damaged during the last days of the dictatorship (CDE, 2006). Yet the challenges of the educational system were extreme. As Kloep and Tarifa noted in 1994:

During the year following our investigation, the economy and political situation in Albania deteriorated rapidly. The total collapse of the economy drastically affected all spheres of life, including education. More than seven hundred schools closed down in the country, mostly in rural areas. Thousands of teachers working in these schools remained jobless. Like many other people, they either moved to towns to start a business, or left the country, seeking a job to support their families. Secondary school enrollment has already dropped from 85 to 42 percent. (Kloep and Tarifa, 1994, p. 171)

Reflecting the need to move beyond these significant barriers, international pressure as well as some domestic mobilization for educational reform persisted. In 2001, Albania adopted the United Nations framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for poverty reduction and education and health sector reform. Education policy reform, as well as some curriculum reform efforts, incorporated to some degree several of the discourses circulated by

international organizations, such as “human rights education”, “democratic citizenship education”, “global education”, and “quality education”²¹. The National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSED) was approved in 2001 and endorsed by the World Bank, United Nations, and bi-lateral donors.

Alongside these education policy initiatives, Albania increasingly pursued the goal of joining the European Union. In 2008, the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2007-2013), or NSDI, was passed by the Albanian Council of Ministers. In the words of Prime Minister Sali Berisha, this document “combines the principal agendas of the Government of Albania” by incorporating international discourses on “sustainable economic and social development, integration into the European Union and NATO structures, as well as achievement of [UN] Millennium Challenge Goals” into one unified strategy document (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 3).

Educational and youth-related goals were clearly embedded in the NSDI’s priorities. Additionally, as we can see in the excerpts of the document’s text below, the Albanian government has clearly adopted the ideological objectives of the World Bank, the OECD, and other international organizations that envision pre-university education as a “highway” leading straight towards global economic competitiveness, democratic citizenship, and European belonging. Along these lines, the NSDI outlines the following targets for educational reform and restructuring:

- ♦ “Curriculum modernization to meet labour market needs” (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 63);

²¹ As previously noted, the concept of “quality education” is heavily laden with normative implications. For information on the dominant international framework for “quality education” see the UNICEF website: http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_quality.html.

- ♦ “Promotion of European principles, preparing young people through education and youth exchange programmes on democratic citizenship, human rights and volunteering culture” (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 64);
- ♦ Promotion of social inclusion to ensure “the integration, development and equality of children at schools” as well as the “enforcement of compulsory education” (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 69);
- ♦ Ensuring “a modern national education system, which will stimulate sustainable economic growth, will raise competitiveness in the region and beyond, and will help consolidate citizen consciousness” (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 74);
- ♦ Developing “standards for teachers and the status of their profession” and “student achievement standards and objectives based on performance” (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 74); and
- ♦ Ensuring that educational opportunities at all levels are provided without discrimination (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 75).²²

Thus, the NSDI, more than any previous education-related policy document, explicitly aims to “harmonize” domestic policy with Western European standards, and systems of thought; indeed, harmonization with the West has become Albania’s number one strategy.

Another important way in which international priorities have framed local policies is through the adoption of foreign “performance targets” as indicators of domestic reform and modernization. Soysal (2002) has noted that “for the potential member states, Europeanness

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serves as a test of their compatibility for convergence and stipulates measures as inscribed in the nondescript question, ‘who belongs?’” (p. 55). Table 3.3 below, developed for the World Bank Educational Excellence and Equity Project (EEEP) and included in the NSDI provides a basic example of how such frameworks are represented in Albanian reform strategy documents (Albanian Council of Ministers, 2008, p. 75).

Table 3.3. Selective Basic Education System Performance Targets in the Albanian System

| Performance Indicator | 2006 | Target 2012 | EU 2004 |
|---|-------------|--------------------|----------------|
| School expectancy for five-year olds (years) | 11.1 | 14 | 17.4 |
| Average annual total compulsory instruction time for 7-8 year olds (hours) | 570 | 660 | 750 |
| Net enrolment rate in secondary education (%) | 55 | 75 | 85 |
| Percentage of females aged 15-24 years in education and training | 33 | 50 | 66 |
| Total public expenditure on education as share of total public expenditure (%) | 10.7 | 12.0 | 10.8 |
| Share of total education expenditure allocated to recurrent non-salary purposes (%) | 10.0 | 13.0 | 19.9 |
| Average number of 15-year old students per computer in public sector schools | 900 | 100 | 10 |
| Mean performance of students aged 15 years on PISA mathematics literacy scale | 381 | 425 | 495 |

Source: Annex 3 – Results framework and monitoring, Project Appraisal Document, Education Excellence and Equity Project, World Bank, May 2006.²³

While perhaps providing a useful monitoring mechanism for politicians and bureaucrats, indicator charts and frameworks such as this concurrently reinforce and substantiate the popular local and international belief that Albania has to “catch up” with the rest of Europe. Perhaps more importantly, the adoption of particular performance indicators for Albanian education reform that are constructed by foreign experts or in reference to standardized models reinforces

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the absence of locally-derived frames for domestic educational reform (Gardinier & Worden, 2011). In other words, from a critical perspective, the adoption and political incorporation of global frames for local aims has served the –perhaps unintended– purpose of reifying the expectations of World Bank experts who consistently define Albanian education in terms of its deficits. Following Barnett and Finnemore (2004), I argue that this deficit frame was created and reinforced by the very nature of the WB’s expertise and authority.

Section III

Actors at the Center: Viewing the National and the Local through the Perspectives of International Experts

One of the central questions explored in this dissertation concerns the relationship between the identities, forms of knowledge, and practices of key actors in the process of localizing global educational models. In this section, I focus on the international experts and consultants that were directly involved in international educational transfer. The core questions I address are: *How did internationals (explicitly and implicitly) frame their experience of providing educational assistance to the local context? How did they themselves become vehicles of international transfer, and what was transferred through them?* Below I discuss the narratives of four international actors, each of whom occupied a leadership position in an international organization in 2009 when I interviewed them. The first two were American citizens, and, as I discuss, drew on their US upbringing to inform their assessment of the Albanian context.

Andrew W.²⁴ was the acting vice director at UNICEF, one of the main UN agencies in Albania

²⁴ These names, and all interviewee identities in this dissertation, are aliases to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

involved in educational programming. Next, with an office in the Albanian Ministry of Education, Dimitri V. held a leadership position with UNDP with responsibility for a program related to education and technology. The third international expert, Leslie S., was a British educational consultant working for a private agency that was hired to assist the Albanian government with creating a plan for the implementation of the new secondary school curriculum. She had left the country by the time of our interview, so our interview took place over Skype video conference. The fourth international expert, Teo T., worked as an Educational Advisor for the Southeast European / Balkans region in an international humanitarian aid organization and participated in regional meetings of the Council of Europe. Of Macedonian origin and based in Geneva, he worked primarily on democratic citizenship education and education for humanitarian law projects for the Balkans.

Though representing very different positions in the wide arena of international educational development, these individuals nonetheless shared many common concerns and ways of thinking. Most significantly, through a detailed analysis of their narratives, I found three dominant aspects of their experience which can be summarized by the following:

1. Being an expert;
2. Expert knowledge; and
3. Performing expertise.

I argue that these three areas comprised the core components of their international expertise. In effect, these three areas were the frames through which the internationals viewed and interacted with their counterparts in Albania and other countries (Teo was not working in Albania at the time of our interview). Below I present a nuanced analysis of each of these three inter-related

frames and how they combined to serve as messages and mechanisms of international educational transfer.

Being an expert. The professional roles and identities of these international experts framed how they consulted with local counterparts on issues of international educational development. The first main characteristic of their role was their goal and desire to make a difference and to contribute to enabling positive local results. Yet at the same time, the internationals were self-reflective, and they recognized, at times, the limitations they faced. For example, Leslie described her desire to make a difference, explaining that, “what makes your life in consultancy work interesting is that once you develop something, you do have a strong personal interest and wish to see it succeed.” Dimitri was more playful in his sense of mission; he recognized both how big his hopes were and how frustrating the realities could be:

Someone needs to be these agents of change... and I think that if I cannot play the role and I cannot implement the digital library, I guarantee, that by the time that I leave, lots of people know what I'm talking about, because I've made sure of that. So even if I don't do it and I don't see a direct result of my efforts – which *does* kill me... [laugh] Well it *does*, I don't do it for the income... But I understand that I cannot change the world on my own... I can't. I can just change the world... just one little thing.

Related to their desire to make a difference and facilitate change, each expert also conveyed his or her role and identity in terms of specific normative and philosophical beliefs about the broader purposes of education. These were either broad statements about the role of education in society, or more specific beliefs about the purpose of educational reform in Albania and other foreign systems with which they had worked. Teo traced these beliefs back to his understanding of philosophy, noting that he felt “stuck” between various people who wanted and resisted change. He explained, “Edmund Burke said: ‘No man ever committed a greater evil than

the one when realizing he cannot do much, decided to do nothing.’ We have to do something, and the only legitimate place is education.” For Dimitri, education was intrinsically linked with technological progress. He shared how his viewpoint resulted from his professional identity in the area of technology, his national identity as an American, and from the dominant influence and identity associated with his home organization, the United Nations:

I am interested in how technology is influencing the way countries and societies develop and having a futurist approach. [And that ties into education? I asked] Well, there is really no other effective way to affect the future[...] I’m an American, and you know, I work for the UN. So I obviously have several agendas in mind. And I have the UN agenda, and my loyalty begins with that. I have to do the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals] and follow what our values are and how the UN operates, and that’s the focus. And it all revolves around democratic principles and equality, from gender to you name it. Even if I didn’t think that, I still would have to do it, but I do think that.

Here Dimitri illustrates the importance of both his own national background and his role as a representative of an international organization. It is the UN’s mission and agenda that provide the strongest frame for his values and way of working in Albania.

Similarly, Andrew’s beliefs about education were also grounded in his organization’s emphasis on children’s rights and the social role that early childhood interventions play. From his perspective, the school should play the important role of creating the normative environment for human rights to be promoted, protected, and imparted to each new generation. This normative orientation led him to struggle over what he found in particular Albanian communities where parents apparently gave permission for their children to be physically disciplined in school. Andrew felt that such behavior had to be addressed through domestic violence prevention and conflict resolution programs at the elementary level. He shared, “We are introducing these ideas at the school and hope that things trickle outwards. [...] We need a generation to take the first step,” and this process should start early, he believed, because “by high school it is too late,

and the behaviors are already formed.” Thus, for Andrew and the others, “being an expert” meant being an authority on what the goals of education should be. Furthermore, they drew on their home organization’s core values and mission to substantiate their role.

Related to their professional role and identity, and their normative beliefs, another commonality among these experts was the nature and importance of their prior experience. All four internationals had a significant amount, several years, of professional experience working in diverse national and regional contexts. As a result of their extensive international work, they all expressed – albeit in different ways and to varying degrees – a sense of confidence in their expertise as well as an air of reflection and skepticism about the impact and effectiveness of their work. In other words, while they were motivated by a desire to contribute to the normative goals of educational development in Albania and other countries, they also conveyed a sense of disappointment or cynicism that things often don’t go as they would like. While their expertise was predicated on their prior experience, they had a keen sense of the limitations inherent in their work. For example, Leslie noted in relation to her work with the Director of the National Pedagogical Institute curriculum division, “The reality is – even George... I was never quite sure of his role, because in many ways, having an implementation strategy before you have actually *got* the curriculum approved is a little premature. [...] But then, you know, in my job, you don’t question these things. You do it. And deliver if you can.”

At times, Andrew seemed to feel that many of his organization’s efforts were acts of futility because of cultural or systemic obstacles. He exhorted, “Albanians are not good at saying no. Maybe it’s a cultural thing. People won’t say no. They say yes, but then nothing happens and it doesn’t work. To get the Ministry to be in touch...how do you get other work highlighted that is good work?” Based on their past experiences, the internationals felt their efforts *should* be

effective. When they faced repeated local obstacles, their frustration mounted. For Dimitri, this frustration led to a perception that many efforts were simply a waste of time and lacked both the necessary planning and the political will to see the interventions through to their intended outcomes. Calling project documents “hot air” and a “wish list,” Dimitri stressed many times that what was needed was a larger sense of long term goals, rather than another project that he felt was designed simply as a “demo for the foreigners.” Thus, based on his prior experience in various countries and his analysis of the Albanian situation at the time, Dimitri was extremely pessimistic about effective reform occurring.

But Dimitri’s analysis of international educational interventions had a double edge. On the one hand, he saw much of it as mimicry where countries adopted borrowed policies just because international experts (like himself) and policy makers said it was the right thing to do even when local officials had no intention or ability to implement the policies. They merely wanted the semblance of legitimacy. To illustrate this point, during our interview, he read a policy document in a sardonic tone, “‘Priority areas, for the annual plan 2007’. So it has an image of, like, *planning*. ‘Priority 1: strengthening leadership management and governance for the education system’. *Cannot happen*. I’ll tell you why. What’s wrong with leadership management and governance now? ... Why does it need to be strengthened? Who says it needs to be strengthened? Let me tell you. *No one*. No one said it, no one did it. They just copied it from a consultant or whatever... from somewhere.” Yet, despite his cynicism, Dimitri continued to stress the importance of “asking why questions” to fuel local reform efforts. In his role as a foreign expert, he tried to the extent he perceived possible to stimulate those why questions and help government actors think through and then implement chosen policy objectives.

Similarly, in the excerpt below, Teo drew on his years of participating in international educational development to paint a bleak and cynical picture of intervention:

What we are doing, what I have seen in, I don't want to state continents and stuff, but really, it's embarrassing, you have somebody with a basket full of money coming, and then the very next day, the secretary of the Minister or whomever – is driving a new grand Cherokee [...] so then everybody is happy – you know, the internationals have their high salaries, and the secretary has got the grand Cherokee, and her boss has god knows what [...]. So much about 'development'.

But what we are trying to do - both EDC [education for democratic citizenship] and EHL [education for humanitarian law] - is education intervention. Intervention is targeting only one part of the mechanism, system, and that's curriculum. But then, because intervention is older than development, because we were doing it from the very beginning when organizations were created, very soon we realized that if you are putting something foreign into an organism, there are two possibilities - either the organism will spit out the foreign thing or you will kill the organism. And they both suck. I mean, they are not good, not functioning in practice.

Thus, as these internationals spoke about their role, they shared both their beliefs about the general goals of international educational development, and indirectly, their skepticism, frustration, and sometimes embarrassment over how the process of educational intervention often played out. Such experiences working across cultures, embedded in the politics of reform in a variety of local and national contexts, contributed to a kind of intuitive wisdom as well as the accumulation of specific analytic skills and expertise. I analyze and explore this amalgam of experiential knowledge below.

The metis of the internationals: Experiential and specialized forms of knowledge.

Collectively, the narratives of these internationals illuminated three kinds of experiential and specialized forms of knowledge that constituted their status as foreign experts. First, the body of international work they conducted in similar and diverse contexts provided a strong basis of knowledge and point of reference for these actors. Second, their applied professional experience

as teachers, administrators, program officers, or in other professional capacities provided an important source of knowledge, which they then applied to their current field assignment. And finally, these actors drew on their training in a range of academic disciplines and fields of expertise including medicine, linguistics, educational administration, and engineering to perform their professional duties. These three inter-related forms of knowledge constitute what I am calling the ‘metis’ of the internationals (Scott, 1998).

The excerpts below illustrate the intricate interplay of these various sources of knowledge. In the narratives, we can begin to see how the internationals framed their expertise and employed various forms of tacit and practical knowledge to identify and address the challenges they faced in the local context. They move seamlessly back and forth between general and abstract principles and their diagnoses of particular local problems and possible solutions. For example, below, Leslie began with the premise that her international experience enabled her to transfer ideas and avoid re-inventing the wheel in a new context. She then drew on her professional and academic training to make the firm assertion that “there are certain steps you have to take” in the process of reform, implying that any expert would agree with her on those common steps. Ultimately, Leslie’s own sense of being an expert coupled with her specialized knowledge of the steps that must be taken form a significant part of the frame that she brought, and confidently applied, to the Albanian context. She shared:

I mean, [laugh] there’s *no other way of working*. That’s how all experts work. They are applying what they *have*, something from their own experience that they think will work. I mean, nobody re-invents the wheel. So, you kind of look at a situation and think, well, that’s a little like . . . , but it is through consultation with the people that you work with that you find out whether *or not* it’s likely to work. But that’s experience. [...] And, well, you see... again, I *worked* in this field now for, I mean, I have a Master’s degree in organizational planning and management in education. And *you know* that there are *certain steps that you have to take*. And if you want to put something in place, you have to know what kind of indicators are likely to come up or that you will be able to get.

Next, to illustrate the consequences of not taking those “certain steps,” Leslie recounted a cautionary tale about what she encountered in Africa. After explaining the situation in a very poor school she visited in the Maasai Mara, she concluded her point that without an adequate analysis of the underlying causes of disparity within the school by the school leadership, reform efforts would generally be ineffective. She explained,

Poor little school, young head is there, and there were two classroom teachers, and the buildings, you know, were absolutely appalling and sort of wooden slats and a hard floor ... but the teacher in one class had got little things that the kids made, and she had stuck thorns into the wood. She'd got something on that floor, built up a geographical map of the area, and she got the kids to collect bones, and whatever, from the animals. And the teacher next door had nothing. *Absolutely nothing*. So I said to the head, ‘Why have you got this disparity in the two classes?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘because this teacher is really good and that teacher isn’t.’ ‘So,’ I said to him, ‘what’s *your* job?’ That’s what you need to look at. Not just the question of *can* they do it, but if they can do it, *how* is it spreading through the school?

In this example, Leslie combined her normative beliefs about what school leaders *should* be doing with her professional expertise in the area of educational administration. She then engaged the collective reservoir of experiential knowledge gathered in various international field locations to draw inferences and tacit “lessons learned” which, in turn, informed her consultation work in Albania.

Similarly, Andrew drew on his professional training as an engineer to describe the lens he adopted in assessing the Albanian context. He compared what he found there with his findings in Africa. Like Leslie, he relied on the implicit “lessons learned” from previous local contexts to offer his expert consultation to officials in subsequent localities. He shared:

As an engineer, I was very curious about how things operate or don’t in the rural areas. I went along on a UNICEF project that was surveying remote areas about the health situation. Things may look fine along the main roads, but if you step outside the path, you will find communities with no adequate services – you can see the gaps. I went to a

village outside Librazhd and they had almost no functioning services. There was a small health dispensary, but the vaccines were kept in a fridge that was not plugged in, and the reason it was unplugged was that most of the time the electricity was off. Everywhere was cold. At least in Africa, it was a warmer climate and no one would go cold. There are no social services in the peripheries here.

In another example, Andrew tried to make sense of the obstacles his organization faced as they tried to implement a project on school autonomy. Framing his conceptualization of what “school autonomy” *should* look like in Albania, Andrew drew on his prior professional experience in Tanzania, as well as his own cultural background growing up in an upper-middle class suburban area of the United States. In the narrative below, he clearly demonstrated his reliance on this comparative lens:

We have been piloting school boards where parents are able to make some decisions – as part of the ‘school autonomy program’ in the national education project. But there has been resistance. Participation in schools is a strange concept for the families here. We did this in Tanzania, and the school boards become a kind of hub and you hope that over time people get used to participating and the school board could be a first step for more participation. You develop a culture for folks to be more publicly concerned. UNICEF is doing a school board pilot project where parents get involved and we are also asking what schools can learn from parents, [...] but right now this participation is a very unsophisticated process. And parents are not used to contributing to school decisions. [...] Compare this to Westchester County where we lived – people had a lot of views like on property tax and the schools. As I grew up, my Mother was the head of the PTA [Parent Teacher Association], and they were active. People in Westchester were angry about high property tax going to schools or not enough. Here, at the school level, and maybe also at the regional directorate level too with directors in Durres and Korca, they are aiming to include parents in some decisions to identify local priorities. So we ask what does this mean at the local levels here, with the school autonomy issue. There are so many local factors and priorities.

Thus as Andrew experienced, analyzed, and assessed particular Albanian communities, he constantly employed a kaleidoscope-like filter of his past personal and professional experiences to frame and interpret his encounters.

Furthermore, due to his underlying assumptions about the value and relevance of international comparisons such as these, Andrew's question about what school autonomy means in Albania was not a neutral question. Instead, the question itself and the way he interpreted and assessed the Albanian communities through his own particular frame, or set of frames, clearly affected what he saw and the solutions he sought. Value judgments, such as the comment that this was an "unsophisticated process" in Albania, also colored his interaction with the local context. As a result, we can see that Andrew's expertise was comprised of a delicate mix of knowledge and skills resulting from his academic training in engineering, "lessons learned" from his previous field assignments in Africa, reflections on his personal experience growing up in the United States, and a set of normative beliefs and values concerning educational development.

Like Andrew and Leslie, Dimitri followed a distinct process of knowledge transfer that was framed by his prior international experience. He went one step further than Andrew in his quest to address not only the question of "what" behind his mandate in Albania, but also the "why" questions. For Dimitri, as for the others, his analysis of why the Albanian government should pursue educational reform linked directly back to his prior normative beliefs about the broader purpose of education as well as his general outlook that countries should not pursue educational reform merely for the sake of legitimacy, but rather to realize particular national goals and strategies that result from a significant process of national planning. Dimitri explained:

I came here and they go, well, we're going to computerize all the schools. And I said: 'Why do you want to do that?' And they look at me like I'm talking Chinese... But unless you answer the question, 'Why do you want to computerize schools?' ...because everybody else does it? Because that's the right answer actually. [laughing] I haven't found anybody asking why questions all over the world. [...] I wrote an article: "21st century skill development" – That's the *why* that I am trying to get them too. That no one ever addressed. That's the *why*: *Do you want to teach them 21st century skills?*

Taken collectively, the narratives above demonstrate that the ability to synthesize the diverse “lessons learned” in particular localities and generate skills and general propositions that can then be applied across contexts (in Albania and elsewhere) represents one of the core components of international expertise, or the metis of the internationals.

Performing expertise: How international experts channel critical, analytical, and normative perceptions and assessments into the process of lending educational assistance.

In the previous two sections, we have seen how being an expert and employing a certain kind of specialized knowledge (metis) places these internationals in a role as *an* authority on a range of issues and topics. However, as Barnett and Finnemore (2004) argue, international consultants and bureaucrats are also in positions *of* authority because local actors rely on their expertise to craft national policy, and because the international organizations which they represent are often seen as embodying a form of technocratic rationality that affords them an important status. In the following section, I discuss the kinds of norms and perceptions that shaped the efforts of these international experts to effect local educational change. By investigating the roles, knowledge, beliefs, and practices of international experts, we can better understand the nuances and properties of how such global frames interact with local aims for educational development.

Many of the underlying norms, values, and perceptions of the international experts examined in this chapter were illuminated in their sense of their role and identity and the underlying components of their expertise. Their skepticism, and at times cynicism, about the effectiveness of their work belied their critical stance towards the process of international educational transfer. In this section, however, I explore how such implicit beliefs were conveyed more directly in their evaluations and critiques of their own work, the local representatives with

whom they engaged, and the institutional frameworks they encountered. Thus, taken collectively, their critical outlooks were directly and indirectly communicated in the following actions:

- a. First, in their critique of the local context in which we find embedded their beliefs and assumptions about what educational reform in Albania *should* be doing and how;
- b. Second, in their description and evaluation of their relations with certain local actors (such as policy makers, Minister of Education, Curriculum Director, Teachers, School Directors, etc.);
- c. Third, in their analysis, interpretation, and assessment of the gaps between *policy talk* and *policy implementation*, particularly regarding salient themes such as sustainability, decentralization, school autonomy, and governance;
- d. Fourth, in their advocacy of particular educational goals and purposes which, in turn, led them to adopt explicit and implicit models of how international education should function to be more effective; and
- e. Fifth, in their critiques of the international system itself – particularly the circulation and imposition of *best practices* and their nascent “theories” about why borrowed policies often fail.

By analyzing the experts’ normative beliefs and practices, we can gain a more explicit understanding of the elements and actions that constituted their expertise and authority during the process of educational transfer.

A key priority among experts (and donors) involved in international educational development is the issue of sustainability and related concerns about the impact and cost effectiveness of their interventions. As we see below, the *lack* of project sustainability was a

significant theme that stemmed from perceptions of the role that local actors play in failing to ensure the terms and conditions necessary for a project's continuation. This issue of the failure of sustainability was intricately linked with their identification of significant "gaps" between policy design and implementation. For Leslie, project sustainability was undermined both by the lack of leadership or ownership over the entire process and by the absence of local authority and leadership to carry out the necessary reforms. She explained:

Now implementation is a *much* bigger issue – it doesn't matter two hoops if the government approves it ... if your stakeholders don't like it, don't understand it, don't see what is to be done, you *cannot* do it, and this is where you've got *gaps*, within the policy implementation I think in Albania. Because when the teacher training section said 'Oh yes, yes, we have a way of training across the country' ... Fine. Have you got the trainers who know how to train for the implementation of the curriculum? 'Oh no, somebody else has to do that bit.' Hello!! You're not going to get that. You know, this is where you've got gaps. It's not impossible, but it does mean a real organization of... responsibility. Line management, if you like. Line management. And you know, somebody has to be ultimately saying, this is how it will be. Especially, I think, for something as big as a new curriculum. It's a *huge* thing!

Similarly, in the case below, Andrew argued that one factor that undermined the sustainability of UNICEF educational projects was the lack of funding available for "taking projects to scale" after a successful local pilot had been conducted. According to his analysis, this problem was due not only to the lack of capacity or leadership on the Albanian side, but also to his organization's structure that limits interventions to small scale short term pilot projects. He explained:

You do a little pilot, and you can pull on lessons learned elsewhere and adapt an approach to the country – we don't have the funds for a national scale approach, so instead, we do a pilot and deal with a teacher, or administrator and hand over a policy that works to the government and try to get that policy into pre-service and in-service teacher education. It's a long process, and a lot of times, we don't have the regional presence. [...] We do pilots for 10 or 20 years, modeling something, but it's only a pilot. It never goes to scale. When you have UNICEF breathing into this thing, pumping resources into a pilot, and it stays a pilot, of course it works, of course it is successful, but

it never moves out of pilot mode. UNICEF is trying to take it to scale, but when you step back, it dies. This is hard for my staff. It's UNICEF culture – it's hard to see impact, how many other schools could they get to? You have to take it to scale. In this part of the world, we should be able to do pilots better and pull out sooner. It's not the developing world – it's a middle income country. Things can move.

Like Leslie's concern about the absence of a "line manager," Dimitri's critique on the issue of sustainability was in the inability of local actors to "answer the why questions" behind particular policies and to develop macro-economic and financially strategic approaches to project sustainability. For example, he explained how in the "master plan" developed primarily by foreign consultants, the plan for sustaining the project was, basically, trying to open the school computer labs to the public and generate revenue. But when he went to talk to the school director about implementing this approach, the Principal said, "Over my dead body am I going to let the public into my lab!" For Dimitri, in his first weeks in Albania, the institutional barriers he faced, particularly at the school level, became glaringly clear. Even before that point, Dimitri believed that the concept of sustainability in the master plan and the mechanism meant to implement it were both severely flawed. He recounted:

The master plan was developed before we got here by a task force – they put it together. It was like a major prime minister task force, he appointed people to the task force, and they had to hire an international consultant to develop the master plan. And of course, as is always the case when you are not involved in the planning part of a project, you usually have certain issues with it and certain discrepancies... So by the time people like us come in here, we have a master plan that someone else did, which had some elements that just simply cannot be done... because one thing is writing the plan and another is implementing it. [...] One of the big utopian ideas that we didn't really care for is, um... sustainability. And sustainability could be addressed in many ways... Now, I personally, prefer kind of a macro-economic vision of sorts where you could make projects sustainable, but on a larger scale. But this sustainability idea was on a lower level, and it almost never works. [...]

Again, through a critical identification of the gaps between official plans for reform and the actual ability to implement the plans on the ground, all of the internationals were wary of success and the ability to sustain project results.

For Teo, the obstacles to project sustainability were inherent in the design of international interventions. He explained, “Usually, people have either a bottom-up or top-down approach and they never meet.” Based on his experience in the Balkans, Teo felt that a mere signature from a Minister was not enough to sustain a project on the ground. But training local educators and people in the field were also unreliable strategies over the long term because teachers often moved in and out of the profession due to financial pressures and the low status afforded to them. Ultimately, from his perspective, educational projects and interventions that were either top down or bottom up were not “cost effective.” He concluded poignantly:

Sustainability has always been not a challenge, but it’s impossible [chortle] to obtain something. Because whenever there was a program, no matter how good or attractive it was, it was really planting palm trees on the North Pole...so while we have someone who is protecting it, it’s fine, but then we he turns his back, the funds are cut, and then it’s finished. Five minutes afterwards, nothing is there. And you have, ah, individual people who have enriched their perspectives and knowledge, but this is not cost effective.

Furthermore, the internationals highlighted how project sustainability hinged on the interaction between their international organizations and local stakeholders. In Andrew’s example, while the UN agency continued “breathing into” the pilot project, it thrived, but as soon as they tried to hand it over to the local stakeholders in order to take it the national scale, the pilot collapsed. Local ownership was thus an ever-elusive goal. Teo’s comment that such an approach to international educational assistance was like “planting palm trees on the North Pole” poignantly captures his sense of the futility of this approach; however, we don’t know exactly

whom he faults. It seems in both his cases, internationals and locals each had their share of the blame.

In addition to the issue of sustainability, critical issues related to governance, decentralization, and school autonomy were also important themes in the work of the internationals. For Leslie, the main job she came to Albania to perform was to advise the government on the implementation of the curriculum reform. But during the process of consultation, she identified several issues that she felt would be major obstacles to effective implementation. The first was the absence of overall accountability for the reform, or what she called, “line management.” The second was the lack of effective structure to devolve authority to the school level. She explained:

You see, school-based, um, first of all, autonomy... there is *no way* that you are stepping towards that at the moment. Autonomy means that the principal of the school, not the local education officer, the *principal* of the school makes his or her own decisions. That requires a level of decentralization – a level of financial decentralization - which has not been considered successfully. Because if you want me to make decisions, as a head, I need to be able to have the money to implement them; i.e. if some of my teachers are not *really* able to do this, I need to be able to get rid of them and put in somebody else who *can*. Now *that kind of autonomy*, ok, ah, many, most of the countries of Eastern Europe have not come to that level of autonomy, but once you start on this slope, that’s where you’re going to land.

Leslie remained skeptical about the reform because she identified “gaps” in the system and the absence of several crucial elements that she felt would jeopardize the success of the reform. What Albania lacked, she felt, was “somebody that has the big picture in mind all the time and sees how the little bits fit together.” In order to achieve implementation success, she argued, “You’ve *got* to have that.”

For Dimitri, his critique was more global and political in nature, but pointed to a similar issue of accountability for implementing reforms. He explained:

It happens all over the world. One of the reasons is that, you know, they want to re-structure the leadership... well, leadership is political – everywhere, by definition. So every politician tries to do this: separate authority from responsibility. Every politician does this. Our [U.S.] President tries to do the same thing on a daily basis. He says, ‘I have authority, but I’m not responsible for what’s happening’... he has committee on top of committee... so if something doesn’t work, they come to him and he says, ‘Hey, I have a democratic process, with committees... it’s not my fault’. You’re not going to find the guilty individual.

Because he was ultimately idealistic about the role that education *should* play in national development, the political nature of his work with the Albanian Ministry of Education bothered Dimitri less than the flawed international system in which such politics were embedded. Yes, he lamented that the Ministry lacked a coherent vision and effective organizational structure to carry out sweeping education reforms. Yet for him, these structural issues were exacerbated by the shortcomings in the modalities of international assistance, such as the importation of so-called “best practices” which he called “worst practices” due to their limited cross-national applicability. At the end of the day, Dimitri concluded:

If you don’t have a plan for the country, what is it you are going to do with education? I’ll tell you what. You’ll just monkey after other countries, which is the best way to fail at just about everything. It will fail. Because there’s no national strategy. Because there is no other country like Albania. It’s a unique thing.

Thus, through the application of their technical and tacit reservoir of knowledge, their critical assessment of local educational efforts, and their reflective position regarding the process of international educational borrowing and lending, the international experts each performed as *an authority* and *in authority* at various junctures.

Interestingly, such reflections also led them to try, in whatever small way, to act as “agents of change” within the international system. They seemed to suggest that perhaps some changes could be made to help address the gaps that they identified and encountered. For

example, when asked about what kind of follow-up was expected for Leslie, after a brief two-week in-country consultation, she lamented this aspect of her work. She explained that in the majority of consultations, there was “zero” time allotted for follow-up. In a regretful tone, she noted, “That’s not built into the money or the bid. And that is the really *bad* part about consultations I think. It’s only when they run for maybe a year or two years, well, like I did in Turkey - I went in and out of Turkey 10 times [...] But two weeks. It’s really, it’s a shame.”

Similarly, Dimitri explained an interesting theory he had about an occurrence called “emergence” in which slowly, over time, through word of mouth and gradual adoption, changes would start to crop up and snowball. Similar to a kind of social network theory, his theory was that if he planted enough seeds in people’s minds about the changes that were needed (such as the incorporation of a digital library), then eventually, through various interventions, the ideas would come to fruition.

Teo also shared his nascent theory of change which he called a “third approach” or “coo-coo’s nest.” He explained it this way:

We have this let’s say, a third approach, and I think more people are going for it. It’s from business education; it’s called coo-coo’s nest. You identify a part of the mechanism that is healthy, and then you invest in this part. So we have to identify the technical body, which is healthy, or you select people and invest in these people, but it’s best if you find an office. And then you influence the way things move, and then it functions like a cancer....but in a healthy way.

Teo recounted an example of how this third approach worked in a small office within a larger organization. It was basically a full transformation of the organizational culture from “closed doors” to a completely open and inviting space with “a lot of flowers in the office.” He noted that “everything that is done is on the walls, very visible” and transparent so that the products of their newfound productivity could be celebrated and shared. For Teo, witnessing this process unfold was like observing “the opening of a flower in the morning” – as the organization’s

culture slowly changed from top to bottom. “It’s not an easy process” he noted, and it’s “very subversive,” but “at the end of the day, nobody knows actually what has happened apart from a couple of people who were there from the beginning, but the organization has completely transformed.” The outcome is a new generation of people who want this different kind of working culture and a leadership that has a new vision of what is possible. For Teo, this third approach was the answer to the dilemma of flawed top-down vs. bottom-up interventions.

Energized by the discussion, he shared:

Whew, the results are like nuclear physics. It’s cost effective. And nobody is injured, you know, it’s not a quick change, it’s not bottom up or top down. Like a cancer. Like a computer virus, except this one is the opposite because it does not destroy the machine.

Ultimately, Teo’s “third approach” and Dimitri’s model of “emergence” were attempts to ameliorate what they saw as the conceptually flawed and ineffective aspects of the process of international educational transfer and development. Returning then to the opening questions of this chapter, these nascent theories exemplify how the internationals used their accumulated experiential and specialized forms of knowledge and their role as foreign experts to frame both their assessment of the local context and their prognosis for local educational development and reform. Their experience provided them with transferable frames of analysis that were then employed to interpret, critique, and diagnose the local educational context. Furthermore, through their interactions and the products of their efforts (i.e. policy and project documents, evaluation reports, new institutional practices, etc.), the internationals came to serve as vehicles of international transfer. The composite of their expertise, which blends professional skills, specialized knowledge, and their critical, analytical, and normative perceptions and beliefs, was the product that they transported and enacted within each new locality.

Ultimately, before we can develop a nuanced understanding of the process of educational localization, we must first address important questions of *how* and *why* transfer occurs, as well as *what* is transferred. In this detailed analysis of the narratives of these four international experts, I have attempted to outline some of these important issues and to locate the origins of transfer not only in the project and policy models that flowed from global to local, but also, embedded in the very expertise of the internationals who transported them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I employed a three-pronged approach to analyzing the role of international actors in Albanian educational reform during the first two post-communist decades, 1992-2010. I argued that global educational discourses, or frames, entered the Albanian context in a number of ways. First, they traveled through international educational interventions that targeted various domestic constituencies including teachers, community members, school leadership, trainers, and educational policy makers. While these interventions can be characterized by a number of discursive categories and “rationalities,” the two most dominant frames in the Albanian context were, and continue to be as of 2012, *education for the global knowledge economy* and *democratic citizenship education*.

Next, I turned to a more institutional analysis of three dominant international educational policy actors: the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Council of Europe. I argued that at the intersection of the two prevailing international educational discourses, we can locate a particular conceptual form: competencies. For the World Bank as well as the OECD, competencies represented the essential building blocks of human and

social capital. For the Council of Europe, they were the “soft” frames that help teachers prepare and empower their students to live and act in a democratic world society.

Woven throughout this discussion was an analysis and critique of the ways in which international expertise often subsumes local forms of knowledge, authority, and educational practice. In the case of the World Bank, this occlusion occurred through the consistent application of a deficit frame to the Albanian educational system which I identified in policy recommendations, project evaluations, and research reports. In the example of the OECD, this occurred at the level of conceptualizing, defining, and selecting the “key competencies” that serve to validate and implicitly regulate educational outcomes through the administration of the PISA assessment.

In the third section, I employed narrative analysis to unearth the various frames transported and locally applied by four international educational experts. Based on a detailed analysis of their role as experts and the various forms of knowledge they employed, I argued that the composite of their expertise served as both a means and an end of international educational transfer.

Discussion

Laura Perry argued that American scholars who participated in educational reconstruction efforts in the Southeast European region were driven by “the fulfillment and sense of purpose that accompanies the role of an expert dispensing essential and hereto now unfamiliar knowledge about such an important concept as democracy” (2009, p. 186). In this study, however, I found that rather than gain fulfillment in their sense of purpose, international experts working with the

Albanian system were often profoundly disappointed. They lamented time and again that things weren't working. They developed sophisticated strategies, frameworks, guidelines, and nascent theories to try to re-direct their failing efforts and get everyone on track. It reminds me of a long time ago (1993) when I lived in Nigeria, and many locals told me with a big smile, "Well, you're trying." What accounts for this gulf between various forms of international intervention and local adoption?

My research indicates that two concurrent and related processes are at work in this "mismatch" between international efforts and local results. The first is an epistemological one, and the second, practical. Consider the OECD's "key competencies" – on the surface, they sound like valuable and useful concepts. But when I viewed them through the prism of my Albanian experience, I started to wonder whose values they represented. Very few of the Albanian teachers, students, and educational professionals I met conceptualized themselves as independent, autonomous, reflective, and self-directed according to these Western standards. Instead, perhaps local experts would identify other more salient knowledge and skill sets that should be measured for success in the Albanian context? The question comes down to who has the authority (as well as the expertise and responsibility) to define and select national-level educational norms, goals, and indicators.

The second issue that concerns me is structural, practical, and mundane: local aims are local, while global frames are global. It's not just a question of scale; it's the meaning attached. The practice of mapping global frames onto local educational aims may be political, strategic, or even a little subversive, but it is not always practical – at least not if the goal is to achieve the actual local aim. For example, consider the issues of individual and school autonomy. As part of a global frame, these ideas look very good; they resonate well with the two dominant discourses

related to education for citizenship and the global economy. But at the level of local aims, these concepts get very messy. In Albania in 2009, very few people, least of all school principals, wanted to be held accountable for his or her failures or blamed for the gaps in implementation.

Furthermore, based on my experience with Albanian schools, municipal educational offices, and the Ministry of Education, the level of access to information, or shall we say “transparency,” was fairly low. Straightforward information, particularly advanced notice about things that were happening, or the cause of particular mishaps, was often quite difficult to obtain. Yet how can local students and educators behave autonomously without accurate and sufficient information with which to assess their choices and options? How can they act independently and be held accountable without being in control of their circumstances? These prerequisites generally did not exist in most Albanian educational contexts. For Albanian educators, the neat principles of decentralized authority, individual accountability, institutional transparency, and general public trust were all features of a counterfactual world. Instead of dwelling on these fallacies, the hard-working Albanian educators that I met focused on the concrete practical issues and steps they *could* take to achieve their modest work-related goals, such as maintaining regular student attendance, minimizing school conflict, and securing a reliable and livable income.

This chapter, then, has investigated the seeming confluence of global frames and local aims in Albanian educational policy development. Despite the appearance of complementarity, I have attempted to identify and explain the significant gaps between the two. Both the conceptual gap and the practical gap serve as mediating factors to the localization process. Because global educational models often did not reflect the familiar norms and practices of local educational actors such as teachers and school principals, they may have been more difficult to adopt and apply within school contexts. Furthermore, because practical local aims often reflected different

priorities and foci, international norms and models that *were* adopted tended to lead to a variety of results and, perhaps unintended, consequences. The multi-faceted analysis of international expertise presented in this chapter thus provides important insights into the mechanisms through which global models are constructed, circulated, and transferred to various localities.

In subsequent chapters, I explore the global through the perspectives of various local actors including educational professionals, policy makers, and teachers who respond in different ways to the global frames they encounter. Despite the idealism and positive motivations of the international experts in this chapter, my analysis of the narratives of local actors in Chapters IV and V supports the argument that, “While foreign experts can play a positive role in the transition, ultimately indigenous actors, teachers, and administrators, must be the primary agents of change” (Neacsu-Hendry, Turek, Kwiecinska, Kati, & Orlin, 1997, p. 512). Nonetheless, the range of perspectives explored in each of these chapters provides evidence that international and local actors alike have important roles to play as exporters, transporters, and localizers of international educational models.

Chapter IV

Middlemen and Midwives of Reform: The In-Between Worlds of Albanian Education Policy Makers and Professionals

After spending over 30 months in Albania, traveling to coastal, rural, urban, and mountainous communities, I began to appreciate the many paradoxes and contradictions that are a part of the daily rituals and routines of everyday Albanians. Public displays of conformity and business-as-usual often gave way to private safe spaces for resistance and confidence among trusted friends and family. So many people found themselves “in between” something. For example, with family members at home and abroad, many Albanians’ heart-strings pulled them in opposing directions. Alternatively, many of the youth saw exciting opportunities waiting for them beyond Albania’s borders – they were both firmly rooted *and* ready to spread their wings, migrating first from their rural communities to the major cities of Albania, and then hoping to travel on to cities abroad. This divided sense of place and time was also salient for local educators involved in the transformation of the Albanian education system; while firmly rooted in Albanian “realities,” they nonetheless took advantage of international travel, training, and expert consultation to inform their evolving ideas about education reform. Along the way, they acquired new roles, knowledge, and skills that contributed to their identities and expertise as local specialists, mentors, managers, and change agents.

This chapter focuses on a small set of these “in-betweens”; i.e. Albanian educational professionals who became “local experts” through their longstanding engagement with international models and foreign experts on the one hand and local stakeholders and conditions on the other. For some of them, shuttling between the political domain of international

organizations and the bureaucracy of the national education system was like “being between two fires” (Bora, 2003). And yet, through their efforts, these experienced educators took on important roles and garnered significant knowledge, reputation, authority, and access to networks both within and beyond Albania. They were the middlemen, midwives, and architects of a complex program for educational reform that –to them– represented not only a departure from the legacy of authoritarianism but also a “spiritual renaissance” for the Albanian people (Spiro, 2006).

Theoretical Framing

The choice of “in-between” to characterize these particular actors suggests a range of meanings. Perhaps most simply, the notion of in-between brings to mind a midpoint between two opposing sides. It refers to that place in the middle, a distinct location that is neither here nor there, neither fully inside nor fully outside. Yet in-between also evokes a state of being in-between things or people, as in the case of work as yet unfinished, a project that is undecided, or a goal unreached. From this perspective, in-betweenness connotes ambivalence, uncertainty, division, or diversion, as well as the possibility of hybridity or some combination of parts.

In the first sense, the actors in this chapter can be scripted into a wider narrative of the transition period -- between the communist dictatorship and a market-based liberal democracy. If “the transition”²⁵ was a winding highway with detours and scenic viewpoints, Albania would surely be somewhere “in-between” points of departure and destination. As noted democratization scholar Thomas Carothers has observed, many of the so-called “transitional countries” such as

²⁵ As noted in previous chapters, the “transition” is a contested idea, and many scholars such as Carothers (2004) argue that it is no longer a useful theoretical frame for mapping post-communist and post-socialist political change. However, in Albania, like in many other post-communist countries, the transition model is often still used to describe the journey from authoritarianism to democracy.

Albania “are neither dictatorial nor clearly headed toward democracy” and have instead “entered a political gray zone” (2002, p. 9). In particular, the lack of public confidence in state institutions is a central concern in these liminal democracies. The professionals discussed in this chapter each in some way located themselves and their role within this fundamental process of change that promises to deliver Albania out of its legacy of dictatorship and into a truly democratic society. In this sense, their efforts to transform the education system can be seen as moving along a virtual transition continuum from authoritarianism to democracy.

Similarly, each of the local experts in this chapter expressed some sense of being between Albania and the West. On the one hand, this was a cultural issue of trying to mediate the demands of “global culture” —embodied in curriculum, education policy, standards and norms dominant in Western countries and transported by international experts— given local Albanian realities and cultural practices. This aspect of being in-between was especially evident in their experience and perception of time and the popular belief that Albania needed to “speed up” reforms and “catch up” with the West. According to the critical analysis of Balkan historiographer Maria Todorova, such “in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitional character, could have made them simply an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as other but as incomplete self.” (1997, pp. 17-18).

Furthermore, building on Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, Todorova argued that the countries of the Balkans collectively came to represent a region of ontological and developmental delay for Western Europeans. “Because the geographic east of Europe and the world situated to the east was lagging behind Europe primarily in economic performance,” she argued, “East came to be identified more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed

capitalist West.[...] This added an additional vector in the relationship between East and West: time, where the movement from past to future was not merely motion but evolution from simple to complex, backward to developed, primitive to cultivated” (Todorova, pp. 11-12). Todorova’s analysis supports the argument put forward in Chapter III of this dissertation that the theoretical underpinnings of the global educational models that have flowed into Albania have consistently framed Albanian education in terms of its deficits as defined by the priorities and assumptions of Western donors.

Apart from these more global connotations related to time and place, being in-between took on a third connotation of being a dual advocate for various national and local constituencies such as government officials, teachers, students, school directors, and parents. The professional practice of these local experts thus involved constant negotiation among a diverse range of interests, and coping with the inherent contradictions of their situation in different ways. For example, while their educational work was enveloped in a policy discourse of “harmonization” with Western models, these actors nonetheless worked actively to peel back the veneer of seamless integration and identify where the cracks and cleavages in the system remained. They did this because, due to their multiple roles, they stood between what they perceived to be the long term public interest and the short term priorities of individual actors. As we see in the narratives below, keeping their long term goals in mind equipped these local experts with enough patience and tenacity to confront immediate challenges even when they were rooted in sticky cultural and political factors.

Related to these long and short term interests, a fourth characteristic of the in-betweens was their ongoing negotiation of historical legacies and cultural patterns that often created road-blocks and resistance to the changes they worked to realize. The narratives below are rife with

various arguments and examples relating to the importance of understanding local culture and national history. In this sense, these in-betweens served not only as interpreters of local culture, but they also began to re-define Albanian culture through their emphasis on “radical” change. This chapter, then, investigates precisely those “processes of cultural translation, everyday acts of interpretation, negotiations, and situational performance through which, over time and across social settings, [educational actors] fashion identities, create lifestyles, and pursue imagined futures” (Hall, 2002, p. 14). Following Hall’s analysis, this chapter shows how the identities of these in-betweens were “produced through multiple forms and forces of discourse in relation to distinctive forms of power” and “performed” as they negotiated “multiple identifications across contexts of situated practice” (Hall, 2002, 14). As discussed below, this constant negotiation often entailed living in, and possibly co-creating, the gray area between myth and fact.

Related to this process of cultural negotiation, production, and performance, a fifth aspect of the in-betweens’ identities was their role in mediating various discourses of power and authority. In one sense, this meant shifting power and authority away from international experts toward a growing body of domestic expertise and competence. In another sense, it meant actively working to de-legitimize authority based on state power and to create policies and institutions based on a more democratic model of authority legitimized by public trust and diverse stakeholders having a voice in decision-making. In the process of negotiating these shifting power relations, the in-betweens in this chapter spoke of various forms and aspects of resistance to authority and aversion to accountability. In this way, they were forced to navigate between the “public/official transcripts” of dominant power groups and the “hidden transcripts” or “offstage performances” such as “rumors, gossip, folktales, jokes” of subordinate groups (Scott,

1990, p. 19). These hidden transcripts were articulated through both the “telling” and the “told” (Villenas, 2005) of the actors’ narratives.

Thus, due to their situation as “in-between” these five important dimensions of Albanian society (the post-communist transition, relations between Albania and the West, contestation among local education stakeholders, and the re-defining of cultural identity and power relations), the actors discussed below provide a range of important insights into the complex negotiation of identity, knowledge, and professional practice as components of educational reform and localization in post-communist Albania.

Vignettes

Andi²⁶

I met Andi, a comfortably well-dressed academic looking professional in his mid-forties, in a taxi on his way from Tirana to conduct a teacher training workshop in the small town of Gramsh. Andi was one of the professionals often hired as a trainer for international education projects in areas such as human rights education, global and peace education, and civic education. In 2004, when I first met him, he was already considered somewhat of a local expert in the area of civic education curriculum and training.

When I returned to Albania in the summer of 2006, I met Andi again in a café along Rruga Sami Frasheri, a bustling street in the central block area of Tirana. By this time, we had become friendly acquaintances. We met informally to discuss how the reforms were faring in Albanian schools. Before I began recording, Andi regaled me with some of his frustrations with the reform. Yet when I turned on the mini-recorder, he smiled and said, “Well, this is a new process and we already perceive it as a success.” We joked about this, and Andi mentioned the

²⁶ The names of the in-betweens are pseudonyms.

famous Gabriel Garcia Marquez novel, “Chronicle of a Death Foretold” which he translated as “Chronicle of a Premeditated Death.” He chided, “Well, this is the chronicle of a premeditated success.” This was a quite literal demonstration of the dichotomy between official (public and formal) and hidden (off-stage) transcripts discussed by Scott (1992).

“Time is the enemy”: The rush to catch up. During our many discussions, Andi stressed over and over how “time is the enemy.” He explained, “The problem in Albania right now is that we run and run and run. We don’t have the time to correct ourselves, to have a record and ask, ‘What have I done?’ – But we have to just keep going, and sometimes, it is not good.” At this point, he shared a quote from the early 20th Century British author Edith Durham. He said, “I always remember Edith Durham – you know the Burden of the Balkans? She compared Albania with Rip Van Winkle, a character who fell asleep for 20 years, and when he woke up, he discovered things had changed and he could not participate. And she said Albanians are the Rip Van Winkles of Europe because it is like Albanians woke up after 500 years and inside Albania, it is like the 14th century while it’s the 20th century in Europe.” When I made a slight grunt of dislike, Andi replied enthusiastically, “I *like* this because being in Albania, we have to keep running” (Andi, 2006).

Durham made such a lasting impression on Andi and other Albanians of his generation that it is interesting to consider an extended quote from her 1905 book Burden of the Balkans.

She wrote:

Without some knowledge of it, travel in the Near East is but dull work, for the folk of the Balkans live in their past to an extent which it is hard for us in the West to realize. It is a land strewn with the wreckage of dead empires; peoples follow one another, inter-tangle, rise and fall, through dim barbaric ages blood-stained and glittering with old-world splendor, striving, each for itself, in a wild struggle for existence, until the all-conquering

Ottoman sweeps down upon them, and for four centuries they are blotted out from the world's history.

When after that long night they awoke – the Rip Van Winkles of Europe, animated only with the desire of going on from the point at which they had left off—they found the face of the world had changed and new Powers had arisen. Internally, there were the problems of the fourteenth century still unsolved. Externally, they were faced with those of the twentieth century, Western and insistent. (Durham, 1905, 4-5)

Andi's recollection of this Edith Durham narrative amused him in a slightly cynical way.

He observed and participated in the changes going on in Albania – the constant striving to measure up and catch up with the West. He recognized the need for change while also castigating the pace, and frequent short-sightedness, in which leaders and politicians pursued it. There was a self-chiding element to Andi's perspective. He was both inside the Albanian identity that Durham constructs, yet he could also get outside enough to see that the Albanian situation in many ways had led to cyclical self-defeat. For example, Andi felt that while raising the stakes for secondary school students through the provision of the state matura examination²⁷, the reform was simultaneously lowering the standards. At the same time, in order to align with Western European education structures, the secondary school term was reduced from four to three years, yet the program included more curricular objectives and requirements. So, he concluded ironically, "The problem is overload; the solution is more. And it has to remain easy for students to achieve the standards in the matura." Andi lived with these contradictions every day; he both shunned and embraced his role within them, but all the while, he continued his productive work as a curriculum specialist at the National Pedagogical Institute.

Throughout the spring of 2009, I often met Andi for coffee or tea. He seemed stressed one day and expressed again that, "time is the enemy." The Education Ministry had asked him to

²⁷ The State Matura is the new national examination for graduating seniors that will be used, eventually, as a college entrance examination. The first state-wide Matura exam was administered in 2006.

develop a 200 page handbook on a new skill-based educational theme in a matter of months. This was on top of his usual work and presumably without any extra form of compensation. Apart from being disenchanted with the curriculum focus (which, according to Andi, was like a “postcard from abroad – ignoring the history, the factors, and the interdependency” from which the idea and approach evolved elsewhere), Andi also felt pressured by the tight deadline. This time I asked, why the rush? Andi gave three reasons. First, as he mentioned before, there was a pervasive sense that Albania needed to “catch up” with the West. According to Edith Durham’s analogy, Albania was six centuries “behind” Europe in 1905. More to the point, with the fall of the dictatorship and the opening of society to international media and travel, most of the population became poignantly aware that despite Enver Hoxha’s²⁸ deception, Albania was indeed one of the poorest and least developed countries of Europe. As discussed in Chapter III, by 2009, international organizations and donors reinforced this perception of Albania’s relative shortcomings in their assessment reports and prescriptive policy recommendations.

Another important factor behind the push for immediate results was the political cycle. Elections were planned for June. Ministers and political party leaders thus used the spring months of good weather to do last minute improvement projects on public facilities and infrastructure such as roads, parks, and schools in order to provide visible evidence that their party delivers on promises and services for the people. Related to this, the third factor behind the rush was a budgetary one. Funding cycles, particularly in the case of donor-driven projects, were specific and concrete. Yet real money often came through late in the cycle and had to be used immediately when donors, such as the World Bank, required the money to be spent within certain pre-determined time frames. According to Andi, local actors often deflected their own responsibility for spending onto higher powers such as the World Bank or other state or

²⁸ The communist party dictator who ruled from 1943-1985.

international agencies. They did this by camouflaging their own interests under the guise of the higher authority, saying, “Hey, it’s not us, it’s the World Bank so we better do this and not make excuses.” This strategy provided great political cover since foreign donors, particularly the World Bank, were seen locally as “beyond question” (Andi, 2009).

When I left Andi that day, he seemed a bit anxious and resigned. Like many of the educators I spoke with, the pressures of the educational system coupled with the usual challenges of day to day life in Albania seemed to be wearing him down. He seemed to feel his work was not appreciated by those in the Ministry, but what could he do? The places of joy that cropped up in our conversations were private and personal – time with family, a planned vacation to the coast, coffee breaks to blow off steam.

Between myth and fact. Andi’s identification with Durham’s portrait of Albanians captures more than the popular sentiment that they need to catch up with Europe. It speaks to his identity as an “in-between” and his identification with the daily dilemmas of occupying insider and outsider roles. Furthermore, Durham’s book was an attempt of an outsider to interpret the Balkans for the benefit of her home audience while simultaneously critiquing her compatriots and their limited understanding of Balkan political affairs. Durham acted as an early ethnographer and people’s diplomat. She was a friendly foreigner who attempted to understand Albania and the Balkans through various local lenses to the extent that she could. For instance, in Chapter 1 of Burden of the Balkans, she situated her place among Balkan peoples through the following narrative:

‘You like our country. Will you do something for us?’ said a Balkan man to me the first time I met him. I inquired cautiously what this odd job might be. ‘Explain us,’ he said, ‘to the new Consul. He does not understand us;’ and he made this request as if the

‘explaining’ of a nation were an ordinary everyday affair. Its comprehensiveness staggered me. ‘But I do not understand you myself,’ I said.

‘If Europe only understood,’ he says (and it should be remarked that he rarely, if ever, classes himself as European)—‘if Europe only understood’ the golden dreams of his nation would be realized, and as in the fairy-tales, there would be happiness ever afterwards. He is often pathetically like a child, who tells you what fine things he is going to do when he is grown up. That Europe cares no jot for his hopes, fears, sorrows, and aspirations so long as they are not likely to jolt that tittupy concern ‘the Balance of Power’ never seems to occur to him. (Durham, 1905, 3-4)

Despite her status as a revered friendly foreigner (many Albanian schools and streets bear her name), Durham did not hesitate to essentialize the people of various Balkan “races” and espouse the “ancient hatreds” explanation for historical Balkan conflicts. Indeed, she asserted in 1905, that the defeat of King Lazar by the Turks on the broad plain of Kosovo in 1389 was “one of the decisive battles of the world – a battle from which the Balkan peoples still suffer, and whose consequences still threaten the peace of Europe” (Durham, 1905, p. 26). Despite being a contested interpretation of the Kosovo conflict, Durham presented it as common fact. Critiquing this conflation of myth and fact, historian Maria Todorova (1997) noted that “although not a particular friend of the Turks, [Durham] fell for and reproduced the myth of their tolerance” (p. 121) and that “except for the Serbs, the battle of Kosovo does not mean much for the rest of the Balkan nations who have had their own and quite different Kosovos” (1997, p. 186). Yet interestingly, Durham’s text exhibited some of the same characteristics as the modern-day narratives of international experts discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. In particular, through her comparative international lens, she framed the local Albanian population as both naïve and culturally complex. Her tale demonstrates how even friendly internationals can unintentionally participate in the paradox of constructing and reinforcing myths about the

“peoples of the Balkans” while attempting to tell “a plain tale of the main facts” of Balkan life (Durham, 1905, p. viii).

In-between culture and mentalities. In April of 2009, Andi again brought Durham’s text into our discussion. This time, we were talking about the role of heroes and leaders –both historic and contemporary– in Albanian society. He said, “The idea of the father, the leader, the one, is very strong. And when we changed, during socialism, this one remained with Enver Hoxha – a kind of god. Andi lamented that the role of the leader was considered absolute, beyond question and beyond criticism for most Albanians. Andi recounted a story of a student during the early 1990s who asked if he believed in God because the leader of the time (Sali Berisha) believed in God. When Andi said no, the student asked how he could not believe in God when the leader did, implying that the leader’s beliefs should be adopted by all without question. It was this kind of absolute thinking that Andi worked to challenge through civic education. But, he added, because this “mentality” was very common and drew from a strong cultural need for security as well as a long-standing tradition of patriarchalism, change was difficult.

To get a deeper sense of how Andi conducted his work as a curriculum specialist in the National Pedagogical Institute, I visited his work place several times. The Institute had recently moved into a new building that housed three sub-divided units: curriculum in one space; training in another; and evaluation and assessment in a third area. According to Spiro (2006), who at various times worked with all three, this organizational structure often operated like three different “kingdoms” within which a “medieval mentality” circulated. Though the structural design was intended to reflect the newly defined division of labor (suggested by a foreign World Bank consultant), the functional roles of each section were not always so clear and distinct to

myself or employees of the Institute. For instance, the curriculum experts were often called on for training, and the training division was often involved with curriculum issues.

One day, after meeting with the Director, I ran into Andi in the hallway and followed him back to his office to snoop around for good resources (he always had interesting books around). His office was jam packed with materials from a range of different projects and activities. Browsing his bookshelf, an interesting title caught my eye: Education for an Open Society, published in 1974 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. I browsed through the book and found one small sentence highlighted in yellow marker. It read: “*The best compliment to the oppressor is to imitate his behavior*” (ASCD, 1974, p. 55). Andi said he picked up the book a long time ago, maybe 1992, when a bunch of foreign textbooks were donated to the Institute, and he had used the quote in developing some materials on civic education.

During that visit, Andi elaborated on the challenges of mentality. “There are only two philosophies of education;” he explained, “One says that the truth is known by those at the top and there is only one truth that is the official truth, so the task of education is to fully appreciate that truth. The other philosophy is that truth is something that people come to know together through dialogue and interaction.” Thus for Andi, approaches to truth involved the constant interplay of knowledge and power; from the first perspective, education must always avoid asking “why”, while from the second, education must always interrogate the question of “why.”²⁹

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Drawing on his role as an educator during the Communist and democratic periods in Albania, Andi had direct experience with both of these “philosophies” (or ideologies) of education. During the previous regime, schooling was designed as a distinct form of indoctrination that relied on a unitary perspective that left no room for questions or critiques. Authorized school curricula, texts, teaching methods, school management policies, and school practices all embodied a centralized configuration of authoritarian power through which a particular kind of knowledge was transmitted and disseminated. As noted in the previous chapter, after the fall of the regime, textbooks were vetted to remove the ideological material, and a long-term process of school and system restructuring began. It was during this period that international organizations like the Soros Foundation, the Council of Europe, UNICEF and UNESCO introduced models of education designed to foster diversity of thought, critical thinking, contestation, and problem solving in schools. Andi was a frequent participant and beneficiary of such interventions, participating throughout the 1990s in projects such as “Street Law,” “Global Education,” and “Education for Democratic Citizenship” (EDC). During 1992-2009, he also participated in transnational and regional networks for citizenship and human rights education, as well as some foreign travel and educational exchange with American human rights and civic educators. With this expansion of his professional profile and accumulation of local and international experience, Andi’s status as a local expert in citizenship education also increased. Unfortunately, this expertise was at times a liability for him as well as an asset.

Overall though, Andi’s contribution to Albania’s education system has been measurable. He has represented Albania at home and abroad at countless education conferences and projects sponsored by Soros Foundation, Council of Europe, UNICEF, UNESCO, the U.S. Government, and other international donors. He has developed textbooks and educational materials for civic

and global education; legal education; human rights education, and many other cross-curricular issues. He has been a trainer for hundreds, possibly thousands, of teachers, school directors, inspectors, and other school and municipal education personnel. He has remained connected to international, regional, and local governmental and non-governmental networks focused on aspects of educational change. Andi's extensive knowledge and his role as a local expert enabled him to make these significant contributions. Furthermore, his educational practice and his role as an "in-between" have kept him motivated by the occasional excitement, affirmation, and connection of international activity, while remaining firmly rooted in Albania for the long-term.

Juliana

Juliana, a compassionate and engaged professor of educational psychology in her early 50s, first met with me at a comfortable café just outside the central "Block" area of Tirana. Like Andi, she had participated in a wide range of international activities while also actively working for long term change in Albania. As a local consultant for international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Council of Europe and a participant in U.S.-sponsored educational exchange projects for citizenship education, Juliana played an important role in many of the efforts to transform Albanian education. Working *with* the government more often than *within* the government, Juliana stayed close to schools, communities, and families. She also worked to develop some curriculum materials and teachers' handbooks on democratic citizenship education and to actively translate international models for the benefit of Albanian learners and teachers. Due to her empathic and

committed work sustained over two decades, Juliana could be considered one of the “midwives” of educational change in Albania.

Between hope and indifference. Her narrative began with a discussion of the “early days” after the fall of the dictatorship when the Albanian people were filled with hope. “They were looking for new idols like Hoxha had been,” she noted. But government leaders were unable to meet the great need and “thirst” for change: “there were rhetorics of reform, but no restructuring” in those early years. In the absence of a functional government, international donors played an important role in democracy assistance, but they also brought a new way of operating based on a “you do it” approach. While they tried to offer technical assistance, Juliana felt there was too little guidance or teaching involved. As a result, she lamented, “there came to be a passivity, an indifference, because people were told to do it themselves but didn’t know how. And educational actors have felt alone.”

We spoke about the different kinds of international interventions that took place. First the Soros Foundation came and established the Albanian Educational Development Project (AEDP) which initially provided significant funds to improve school infrastructure. Soros wanted to “crack the framework of communism” throughout the region, and thus represented a “real investment in the people,” primarily through direct school-based and school improvement projects. Soros-sponsored projects such as “Kualida”, “Street Law”, “Critical Thinking”, and “Step by Step” for younger children established a strong network of Soros/AEDP-affiliated educational professionals including Andi and Juliana. Most of these projects relied on extensive training through a “cascade approach” in which teachers (and/or youth leaders) were trained to become peer trainers back in their schools and communities. Nonetheless, according to Juliana,

these projects lacked a systematic approach and did not create long-term sustainable educational development through investment in teacher education programs. The direct approach of foreign donors such as Soros Foundation also cultivated an expectation that training would automatically entail financial remuneration. Juliana saw the consequence of this approach as a kind of donor dependency in which funding agencies neglected to promote the idea that training was “a long term investment in *them* [educators] as a resource.”

Another problem she cited with international education assistance early on was the lack of follow up and monitoring in which teachers would be supported and/or mentored in the aftermath of participation in a project. While teachers enjoyed participation in the training process, the concrete challenges they faced in schools were not altered, and as a result, “it was like they poured water into their brain” and then left teachers on their own in schools. These troubles were also affected by the resistance of the Education Ministry in allowing direct provision of materials and services to the schools. According to Juliana, though she and a small cadre of others participated in a wonderful exchange program to learn about democratic citizenship education in the U.S., it took several years to realize their plans in Albanian schools. With a tightly controlled centralized curriculum, introducing newly developed materials on civic education was a challenge. She lamented that the obstinacy of the Ministry forced them to remain at the periphery of the system for many years, working with individual teachers and schools, introducing extra-curricular materials, without full inclusion in the official school program.

Between policy and practice. By 2004, Juliana noted that education policies were moving in the direction of poverty reduction due to the primacy of the UN’s Millennium

Development Goals and Albania's desire to be included in the World Bank's Fast Track Initiative. From her perspective, the government lacked capacity to fully realize such goals, and a "huge gap" existed between policies on paper and the procedures used to implement them, which were often short-sighted and "emotional", i.e. based on the personalities involved. Though there was much talk about promoting "quality" in education, Juliana was skeptical about the real impact of the reforms. Contrary to the rhetoric of new models, teachers seemed resigned, or even numb, about possibilities for educational change. She saw a lack of integrity where people were not true to what they said, and would instead give a "performance" because "they know exactly what you want from them and are programmed to give you that." This de-coupling of emotions and intentions from actions showed there was no "real logic of care in education" and, according to Juliana, "even teachers don't seem to care about the students as perhaps they should." Instead, teachers seemed to be "compelled from the outside not the inside" and increasingly "detached from the whole process."

Between government and schools. By 2006, Juliana felt even more caught in-between the reforms of the Education Ministry and the interests of local teachers. With a priority to clean out the rampant corruption in the educational system, the new Education Minister, Genc Pollo, made it his mission to reform the textbook publishing process. Teachers were invited (on a *non-voluntary* basis) to participate in the selection of alternative textbooks for their subjects. Yet they had little preparation for evaluating and selecting various texts. At one point, a teacher friend of Juliana's called her to ask what was going on because she was required to be at the school on a holiday in order to select the alternate texts, but nothing was happening. For Juliana, this query presented a dilemma. She explained, "On the other side, I work for the committee on textbook

approval. She is the teacher, and I am part of the decision making—so there is a huge gap for me... This is something that I have for so long been looking for, to have different textbooks, different philosophies of reaching certain objectives for each child. But for a teacher, as a practitioner, you cannot understand it!” Juliana felt the teachers were not prepared to select the texts, and even if they did make a choice, the book might be left on the shelf if the teacher lacked confidence in utilizing it effectively. Thus, Juliana concluded, “It is only the appearance. What I really want to happen is the process where the teacher understands that each child is a unique person, and he has unique needs and unique learning styles, so we have to use different instruments. One child may need Book A, but for the other, Book B might be better.” According to Juliana, this is where the Minister failed – he neglected to include teachers in the process of explaining the changes and he never articulated the longer term goals and vision that guided the new procedures.

Spiro

In 2003, I attended a small conference hosted by a non-governmental network of educators committed to educational reform in Albania. At this meeting, I met Spiro, a soft spoken man in his early sixties who had worked in various educational roles for several decades. Together with Juliana and some other colleagues, Spiro had created this network to bring diverse educational stakeholders together to inform significant policy change in the arena of pre-university education. He had a breadth of experience working with schools, the government, and international organizations such as UNICEF and the World Bank. He served as an advisor to the Education Ministry and, for various periods, a professional at the National Pedagogical Institute.

As early as 2001, Spiro was deemed a “local expert” and asked to participate in the development of educational strategies and policies. By the end of 2003, when I met him, he was poised to mobilize civil society support for systemic change, eventually collaborating with non-governmental groups such as MJAFT [ENOUGH], a highly visible civil society advocacy organization. Due to his active engagement mediating the interests of diverse educational stakeholders (i.e. international experts, national Ministry officials, civil society leaders, school directors, teachers, students, and parents) and his influential role as both a forward-thinking dreamer and a historically-minded policy advisor, Spiro epitomized the crucial role of the “in-betweens” in the process of Albanian educational reform.

Standing up to the Internationals. On the one hand, as a well-respected local education expert, Spiro had a complex relationship with international experts, alternatively embracing, modifying, or eschewing their advice. “We have an intense foreign assistance,” he explained in 2006, “but sometimes foreign experts, I call them ‘*damn internationals*’ because they sometimes just did a copy / paste. For example, they replaced Moldova with Albania, but they forgot to erase the footnote,” he said laughing; “and, yes, we noticed - because it’s a business. On the other hand, they are not able to give us useful advice sometimes because they don’t know the Albanian context. They cannot transfer European or Western experience in transition countries so easily – it’s not so easy.” In another example, Spiro seemed offended by the condescending approach of the American expert whom he considered “extremely outdated.” “He is a professor and he is going to tell us the alphabet?” Spiro exclaimed, as he described how the consultant’s report consisted of 40 pages of material that had been “copy-pasted from their university desks.”

“I rejected all of them,” he exclaimed defiantly. And although there were repercussions, Spiro felt this was what he had to do.

His reputation for challenging the World Bank’s external authority did not escape his international counterparts. With his role as a go-between assisting both World Bank and the Minister of Education on policy reform, he was often forced to stand his ground. As he explained, “I am in charge of coordinating all the international consultants and local consultants, and my task is to comment on the policy. One of them said to me, ‘Spiro, you are a hard man’ because that time I did not say, ‘Yes, you are a God.’ “We treat World Bank as a God, but what is World Bank?” he challenged. “World Bank is a Bank. World Bank would like to spend money.” In both 2006 and 2007, Spiro informed me that while Albania is really lucky to have the World Bank money in order to implement needed educational reforms, ultimately, “international experts cannot reform our educational system.”

For Spiro, the alternative to international experts who tried to coerce Albanian policy makers into inappropriate changes was a vision of international partnership. He explained in 2006,

We need good internationals, even now. Because we have not yet in Albania a new generation of experts; we need them.... The foreign institutions like the World Bank exert pressure to agree as much as possible with experts... We are trying to resist, but sometimes the World Bank plays tough. But at this stage, they cannot give us advice on a practical level, just at the general level.

When I suggested in 2007 that it looked as though Albanian policy makers were being influenced to a great extent by foreign experts, Spiro firmly disagreed. “Don’t distort the reality,” he replied. “It is not fair to attribute to World Bank all the policy changes” he explained. When World Bank advisors cautioned against instituting the national Matura exam so soon and against the liberalization of the textbook industry so quickly, the Ministry went ahead anyway. For

Spiro, even without expert support and money, “We didn’t care. We did these things ourselves... We are lucky the World Bank is so present. This is a real challenge to change in such a short term. I started to work for World Bank in 2006, but most of the reform we carried out before.” Thus, as a local expert and dual-advocate for domestic and international actors in education reform, Spiro welcomed foreign assistance and actively sought to employ foreign experts as “partners” for some aspects of the reform while concurrently prioritizing national level concerns and sources of authority over those of the internationals. As discussed below, Spiro had a clear rationale for his resistance to the internationals and strong cultural and political explanations for why it was necessary to build a “critical mass” of local expertise and public support in order to truly succeed in transforming the Albanian education system.

Cultural context and historical legacy. Throughout our discussions in 2006 and 2007, as the public spotlight on education reform intensified, Spiro attributed the success and failure of reforms to factors he considered deeply “cultural.” He argued that “these deep reforms such as education reforms are based on culture, cultural context... For example, a small task force can design a wonderful educational program, but for sure it will be a failure if the public and school community and professionals don’t see the urgent necessity to do that.” He then acted out a sort of role play dialogue as follows: “Based on our tradition, people say, ‘okay, what did you say - to change and to do that?’ ‘Yes, yes, I did that, now go away.’ And they do another thing. This is sabotage and it happened many times. ‘Ok, you are going to change curriculum?’ ‘Ok, change it. I am not going to deal with this. I am not prepared to change it,’” he said, enacting a teacher’s imagined response. For Spiro, this is how Albanian teachers, principals and others “avoid the state” and any form of individual responsibility and accountability. This “tradition” was so

engrained, he continued, that it would not be changed through additional trainings; instead, “it is much more productive than a thousand trainings to put some incentives, to clarify their responsibilities, and for them to be more accountable.” And the only way to mobilize this shift was to get the public on board with the changes; “Public opinion must be our partners- we have to be in the same boat because they are eager to turn it over - because our state is our enemy.”

In another example, Spiro further explained the school directors’ aversion to individual accountability. He conducted a debate while teaching in the University and found that none of the participants wanted to rely on one central decision maker in the exercise. His explanation was again based on “culture.” “In our country, it is necessary to stress individual responsibility and they don’t like this; why? Because they are scared from the authoritarian regime, and they don’t like to view power only on one person. Even the principal doesn’t like to have all the power to hire and fire teachers because he knows what kind of pressure he will face. This is our culture and we have to say ‘ok, our way is not individual, but collegial – it’s a different way.’” Yet international experts often advocated for decentralization and school-based decision-making. According to Spiro, “It doesn’t work here in Albania.” Instead, Spiro argued, reforms must always take into account not only the culture and tradition, but also what he defined as the “root” of this culture: the legacy of dictatorship. “We have to explain the root of this culture. For a long time, our state was our enemy. We have no historical memory when the state was not the enemy. Perhaps in the period of the ten years with our King. So, during the dictatorship and even now, the state is our enemy, because we go to the state office and the officer and I start to negotiate for dividends and so on... That is why one of our slogans of this reform is to ‘resuscitate the people’s belief and trust in the state institutions.’”

From his perspective, the legacy of authoritarianism lived in Albanian culture and continued to affect the entire educational system from the Ministry down to the students' families and teachers. Thus, from his perspective, successful reforms must take this culture into account even as they try to institutionalize change. Again Spiro argued how challenging this approach was in practice. "I'd like to tell an example from our culture," he noted. "The typical parent exerts pressure on the teacher to put a high mark. Why? Because during the dictatorship the diploma is very important, because if you don't go to secondary school, you finish at some very ordinary job, at the factory or farm. If you have a diploma, after that, in order to go to university, they calculate the average. It doesn't matter what your child knows, for her, it is necessary to have the paper. This is the old mentality, but people cannot delete it. ... From one point of view, we have to blame the parents, but we have to understand them. Why do our teachers raise the marks, and don't put merit based marks? It is an official lie. But our people used to lie officially for a long period. The word is separated from the truth."

Spiro saw educational reform as a fundamental way to alter this cultural history of "official lies." He recognized that this was a long term process of change, but also felt that the public was eager to move beyond the past era and begin to trust in the government. His vision of transforming the education system entailed managing change from the "the end to the start", i.e. shifting from an "input-driven" system to one that is "output driven." This complete reversal, however, given what he saw as deeply rooted cultural patterns in the opposite direction, was as yet incomplete. Thus, he concluded in 2006, "Of course, education is a tool for democracy, citizenship, and the market economy, but up to now, we don't have a school for democracy and market economics. We have a mixture of dictatorship mentality, with some verbal statements on democracy." For example, new educational models like human rights education fell prey to this

mixing of the old and the new; Spiro recounted how “students have to learn by heart human rights, children’s rights, etc., and this is real dictatorship behavior, because what are the characteristics of the dictatorship period? A separation of the word from the truth - this is the main thing, and we are used to doing that.”

He constantly faced this struggle to navigate through the vestiges of the past and towards a more democratic future. For him, education was the key to a kind of cultural rebirth. As he explained in 2006, “Now, this transition period...I call it ‘*democracy*’ period; it’s not a democracy, it’s not a dictatorship, but it is *democracy*. The characteristic is to separate the word from the action. To say the truth, ok... I can repeat your slogans, but I am not obliged to behave the same – so there is a separation, and this is typical of the school. So my principle is that you can *learn* democracy through this change. The school has to behave as a democratic institution; school government has to have a say in the school governance; our curriculum has to be active and interactive; and some specific subjects must be transformed. But this is a very difficult challenge because we are overloaded with dictatorship mentality.”

Insufficient local expertise. Another obstacle to the realization of the radical education reform that Spiro advocated was what he saw as a lack of professional preparation and “insufficient” local expertise. Related to his eschewing of imposition from the “damn internationals,” Spiro nonetheless welcomed the assistance of some international experts in helping during what he deemed a decade of learning. As he explained in 2006, “The education system, in my opinion, is a kind of socialist enclave in a democratic regime because the teachers are all paid for their job, every school principal... and like the previous period, there are not strong incentives to change or perform. So during the first period, we did not have the Albanian

experts to invent a new education system, and public opinion was too reluctant. We are not aware about the necessary change, so we passed a learning period for the last perhaps 7-8 years from 1991-98 or even 2000.”

Again Spiro stressed the significance and paradox of timing; while he understood that radical changes take time, he nonetheless wanted Albania to quickly move ahead and pass out of the “in-between” cultural space rife with authoritarian legacies. From his perspective, “For some years we were not able to carry out reform in Albania because 15 years are too few to form a team with a high level of expertise. So in the first years, we were students, and let’s hope good students.... We have a very intense relationship with foreign experts - with literature, we go abroad many times, etc. and I can say that now, there is a core expertise that can meet the hard challenges, but we cannot do it ourselves alone. We need partnerships with real experts.”

Implementing the PISA (OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment) was a first “modest” step in this direction, but Spiro stressed time and again that Albania did not have “the sufficient expertise to carry out a real curriculum reform, or to be at the level of European standards.” While he was confident that the curriculum reform process was well underway by 2007, further reforms for in-service teacher training and the professionalization of school directors awaited development and implementation. And although he felt that “a critical mass” of local expertise was beginning to form, these were “very complicated reforms” in areas where the Ministry largely lacked sufficient expertise. It was for this reason, that Spiro acknowledged the need and desire for “real” international partnerships.

Domestic legitimacy: The question of political will and public support. The third main factor that Spiro identified as fueling the momentum for Albanian educational reform was

the gradual establishment of domestic legitimacy based on public support and political will. As noted above, he felt that Albanians were used to an education system predicated on authoritarian power that allowed leaders to avoid public accountability and encouraged actors such as directors, teachers, and students to participate in the “separation of the word from the truth.” Spiro argued that although some aspects of the reform made teachers and directors uncomfortable, in general, the reform was welcomed:

Teachers, experts, NGOs have asked for many years to carry out these reforms. In reality, for many years, there was a lot of bottom up pressure to carry out these reforms. For example, with the Matura exam, when the new minister was appointed, I said to him, it would be great if you change the morality of the Matura exam. The minister said – okay, set up a group. And I started to select different people, generally speaking, outstanding people, a team consisting of 20 people, and we started to meet each other every week for 4-5 months. In the meantime, the Minister had other people go to schools to talk with students. This was the way. Media was very interested and opened the door. I cannot say this is a top-bottom reform, because the real concern was expressed for many years from the grassroots, even for the market of textbooks, it has been coming for a long time. In some way, we are representative of all peoples’ concerns.

Though he believed that due to culture, some teachers and school principals would dislike the changes, Spiro was confident that the reforms were firmly in the best interest of the people and actively reflected their concerns. He repeated several times in 2007 that the reforms were not top-down, but rather, “a mixture of bottom-up and top-down reform.” Without this public support, he noted, there would be too high a political risk involved, and the Ministry would not “have the courage” to carry out such unpopular reforms. He also felt that raising the learning standards of the students was the ultimate objective, even if it caused some unrest among teachers and school leaders. To reach this overarching goal, Spiro once again adopted an in-between, hybrid approach. On the one hand, he focused on domestic actors and aimed to create a merit-based educational system that measured students’ results and held their teachers directly accountable for these learning outcomes. With the results from new standard examinations,

lower performing teachers would be demoted, and teachers whose students' performed better would be rewarded.

When I raised a question about this issue, and noted that teachers might be threatened by this reform because they were used to being the authority, Spiro reacted adamantly, "Okay, but this is state authority. I don't care at all about teachers' stress, because I care about students' learning achievements and the teacher is one of the main factors. Let me even stress that we have to oblige teachers to carry out their job; the next year we have to impose this national examination and add some other requests; they have to read professional literature. We have a lot from the dictator's strategy; we have a lot of experience how to constrain people to carry out their job," he joked. Then he continued, "But, eh, this is welcome from parents; they completely agree because they are victims of the low professional level of the teachers."

Yet on the other hand, Spiro aimed to create legitimacy through the importation, translation, and adoption of European educational materials. He explained that the Pedagogical Institute was working to change the learning standards of the national curriculum: "They have to change even the learning standards to be near the European standards because foreign textbooks are based on these standards. This is one of our ways to speed up this change ... and we will be happy if foreign publishers submit to us such kind of textbooks for human rights, civic education, and even literature, because there is a lot of indoctrination with our textbooks. So, it's a way to change, but this takes time. And this is not just our concern, but it is a concern for all ex-communist countries especially in the Balkan region and post-Soviet countries."

While these were his proposed reforms, and Spiro played a very important role as a principle advisor to Education Ministers and a World Bank consultant, he was the first to state that such "radical reform" would not have been possible without the political will of the Ministry

and agreement from the opposition party. From his perspective, “Even parents, teachers, principals are more aware now and are forth-coming and exert much more pressure for radical change, and because of this, our Minister is very charismatic now. Even the opposition didn’t combat our reform; they have a lot of sensitivities for higher education, but not pre-university, and I think this is because there is a general consensus among all public and professional opinion that it is time to change and to carry out good reforms. There is even political agreement about it.” By 2007, Spiro again attributed the success of passing the reform to its wide public support and the accumulation of local expertise. He stated confidently, “This is the time because the expertise of local experts has matured. If this minister had come ten years ago, nothing would happen.”

Thus by 2007, Spiro had become one of the principle architects of Albanian education reform. From his perspective, due to the combination of a number of factors including the political will and courage of Education Minister Genc Pollo, the mobilization of popular support, and the “maturation” of local expertise, the time was ripe for radical education reform.

Discussion

In the narratives of these key “in-between” actors, we can identify many common qualities such as leadership, various forms of authority, integrity, patience/endurance, commitment, vision, courage, trust in others, building constituencies, resilience, a longing for the truth, and a deep desire for change. Yet they also exhibited some key differences such as their relations with those in power, their preferred strategies for change, and the intellectual tools they utilized in waging quietly persistent campaigns for educational and social change. Overall, this

chapter has focused on the evolution of their role and identities as local experts who were increasingly responsible for the day to day work of Albanian education reform and transformation. Yet there is more to this story.

Scandalous silences: Anger and the absence of accountability. Among the in-betweens that I met with, I occasionally glimpsed beneath the performance of the official transcript, behind the hidden acts of resistance and camouflage. Below the surface, many of these professionals carefully protected subterranean streams of anger, frustration, and resignation coupled with springs of hope and resilience. For instance, in the summer of 2009, the deceitful behavior and rampant sexual misconduct of then Minister of Youth, Culture, and Sport, Ylli Pango exploded into the public eye. He was caught on “candid camera” trying to seduce a young female job applicant. The media lit up when he was immediately exposed. Within an hour, Prime Minister Sali Berisha dismissed him from his official post. As I discussed this event with my local colleague Besa the following morning, her response was: “Okay, but what about the (March 15, 2008) munitions explosion in Gerdec in which 26 people were killed and 300 wounded? Why has no one been held accountable? It should be Berisha himself to be accountable for that,” she argued. She then spoke at length about her struggle to get a land permit to legalize her home ownership, but that was taking years. When I asked how she and others felt about such bureaucratic delays, double standards, and the lack of public accountability, she said, “Furious.” But you would never know that sentiment by looking at the surface.

Some of the internationals I spoke with wondered privately, “Where is the outrage” of everyday Albanians? Where is the civil society mobilization? Where is the backlash against elected officials for scandalous behavior? When will leaders pay the political cost of impunity? I

argue that apart from the occasional uprising and public protest, people's personal outrage was carefully protected and encoded in camouflaged acts of resistance and resilience. According to Andi, Albanians have long practiced these arts of camouflage. "There is a saying in Albania," he explained, "When the Turkish occupied Albania they imposed their religion and lots of people converted because of the taxes. So outside they followed the Turkish, and inside, they did what they liked, just as usual. The saying is: 'You eat the bread of the Turks, but you still follow the rituals of the Albanian Orthodox.' In other words, you do what you want in the home, like a double life." Like the "official lies" and "acts of sabotage" that Spiro recounted, these camouflaged protests had become a regular part of everyday life in Albanian society. Though the collapse of the dictatorship culminated the need to adopt pretenses out of fear of state repression, these practices nonetheless seemed alive and well in the post-communist period. During my fieldwork, I nicknamed such subtle acts of sabotage and camouflage "*talking sideways*" – doing or saying one thing for your audience while you were doing or saying something completely different for yourself (or another private audience).

When I spoke with Zamira, a strong and angular middle-aged woman who was well-known as a long-time human rights activist and educator, she summed up this cultural practice in a different way. In our 2004 interview, she discussed the impact of the former regime on Albanian society noting that the cruelty of the dictatorship had "made people double, triple layered, hiding themselves, and people cannot be trusted. People were always afraid and looked around about what you said and did." She described this anxiety as a "very specific formula" that could not be easily deciphered or understood by outsiders. Zamira felt that "the heads of the Albanians were bound like the Chinese women's feet – with deformed, misformed, minds." And for her, this condition was why the pathway to democracy was so difficult. Like Spiro, she

underscored the lack of public trust in the government, noting that the people did not “see a green light for a democratic future.” Without trust in political institutions, rule of law, and a new understanding of democratic processes in everyday life, she explained, democracy was still out of reach. The “only hope,” she concluded, was in a gradual change in thinking over time, particularly among the younger generation “who inherit less and less from the past.” Like many of the other local and international experts and change agents with whom I spoke, Zamira too felt that education provided the key to achieving the deep and difficult goal of a truly democratic Albanian society.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the very significant yet under-appreciated role of educational professionals, such as Andi, Juliana, and Spiro, who have spent the bulk of their post-communist professional careers as mediators of social change. As “in-betweens,” they have worked with a wide range of stakeholders including local teachers, parents, students, school directors, municipal education officers, and Ministry officials up through international colleagues, experts, and consultants. They have performed a diverse range of tasks including writing textbooks, developing curriculum materials, training teachers, research, advocacy, and crafting national level policies and strategic plans for education reform. They have worked on small scale pilot projects and curriculum modules, to the largest scale of national policy, international educational exchange, and inter-regional educational cooperation. Through all these endeavors, they have remained primarily oriented towards the long range goal of constructing an

educational system that can produce a new generation of competent democratic citizens and a viable democratic state.

In addition to the concrete products of their situated labor, these in-betweens have also played a very important role by constructing and circulating discourses of change in Albania. For example, in their characterizations and representations of local challenges, both Juliana and Spiro shaped donor priorities and, at times, influenced the direct flow of funding in certain directions. Alternatively, through the creation of civic education curriculum and texts, Andi framed and crafted the desired qualities of citizenship that will influence teachers' actions and words in the classroom. And through his strong convictions, both moral and professional, Spiro persuaded Education Ministers to adopt certain priorities over others. These discursive formations were important products of the constant negotiations and mediations practiced by the in-betweens.

In the next chapter, I discuss the pivotal role that teachers play as agents of change *and continuity* in post-communist Albania. Moving from the level of analysis of these national in-between professionals to the level of the school is an important and dramatic shift. For, I found that one of the most interesting and powerful discursive constructions that emerged through the analysis of these in-between narratives was the new construction of the teacher's profile based on qualities of individual responsibility, effectiveness, and accountability. According to Spiro, the policy reforms would mandate that teachers be certified and evaluated through a standardized test. Following the principle of merit-based assessment, their performance on this examination would soon determine their advancement or demotion. This model of teacher professionalization will have a direct impact on the lives and work of the teachers discussed in Chapter V. Thus it is extremely important to identify and begin to understand how such narratives of teacher performance and professionalization have come into being in the current process of Albanian

education reform. Analyzing the roles and identities, beliefs, and professional practices of such key “in-betweens” as Andi, Juliana, and Spiro has helped decipher this puzzle.

Ultimately, all of the in-between actors discussed in this chapter have had a direct impact on the lives of Albanian teachers. As we will see in the subsequent chapter, teachers themselves interpreted and enacted new curricular and pedagogical models in a range of ways, often adopting hybrid forms of practice that incorporated both innovative and familiar forms of teaching. Thus, once again, we can view Andi, Juliana, and Spiro as in-between; at the national level, they served as intermediaries between the global models discussed in Chapter III and the everyday knowledge and practice of teachers discussed in Chapter V. As such, they are crucial figures in the process of educational localization, reform, and democratization. This examination of how and why these in-betweens negotiated the various conflicts and contradictions of Albanian educational change thus helps illuminate an important component of the wider process of educational localization during the first two decades of the post-communist period.

Chapter V

Agents of Change and Continuity:

Albanian Teachers as Mothers, Mentors, and Mediators

Albanian teachers are situated at a critical juncture in the educational reform process. They are envisioned to play a central role in delivering the new curriculum to secondary school students throughout the country as part of the widespread reforms. They are charged with preparing a new generation of students – young people who will participate in an evolving democracy within Albania as well as becoming global citizens in an expanded European Union and interdependent world. Furthermore, teachers are positioned to be instrumental in a subtle cultural shift indicated in policy documents. As Albania becomes increasingly oriented towards Europe – new priorities are emerging embedded in educational goals. For example, recent education policy documents emphasized issues of diversity, tolerance, human rights, equality, and non-discrimination as norms that students and teachers should embrace. New educational models constructed the classroom as an open space for inquiry and experimentation where students are at the center and teachers play the role of facilitator and mentor. As a result of these policies, teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices constantly mediate the implementation of educational policy in the classroom. Teachers are thus at the crux of the democratization process; without them, reform agendas for democratic citizenship education and the preparation of youth for the global knowledge economy will inevitably fail.

The teachers discussed in this chapter provide a window into the world of Albanian teachers during this historical moment. Their differences illuminate some of the important variation among teacher identities and practices. Yet certain qualities and themes unite them as

well. This chapter begins with an examination of how teaching for and within the democratization process framed teachers' professional identities and practice. These prescribed frames are then juxtaposed with an analysis of the teachers' situated forms of knowledge, expertise, and practice. The narratives of three Albanian pre-university teachers, Eda, Rozafa and Albana, are then presented and discussed. These vignettes demonstrate the complex choices that Albanian teachers made and provide examples of their hybrid classroom practice. In analyzing these narratives, I pay particular attention to the range and nuance of the factors that influence the teachers' choices. I rely on the theoretical work of Larry Cuban and others to develop a layered understanding of how teachers' choices are both innovative and "situationally constrained" (Cuban, 1984). Ultimately, I argue that this analysis of the family-like complexity³⁰ of school life has implications both for the local implementation of educational reform policies and for the global circulation and adoption of educational models designed to transport students and teachers down the so-called "highway"³¹ of secondary education.

Theoretical Framework

Teachers as local agents of change and continuity. The building of a democratic society in the wake of an authoritarian collapse can be seen as a transformational project. Schools that were once created and legitimized as an apparatus of a centralized political system are now seen as both preparatory engines for democratic citizenship as well as microcosms of

³⁰ Noted educational researchers Lieberman and Miller (1984) argue that, "In effect, schools are like families where unspoken understandings dominate. [...] As in the family in all its complexity, there are those endless tensions that one learns to tolerate" (p. 94).

³¹ According to World Bank documents, "Secondary education is the highway between primary schooling, tertiary education, and the labor market. Its ability to connect the different destinations and to take young people where they want to go in life is crucial" (World Bank 2005a, xii).

democratic society. The role of teachers within these institutions, like active citizens in the new democracy, is to catalyze the necessary participation and preparation to reach these transformational goals. In this context, teachers act as agents of change.

Yet schools often serve another function in both democratic and authoritarian societies. “Education is used to promote national unity and uniformity, protect respect for authority, and serve as a common mechanism for the preservation of traditions and their continuity” (Britzman 2003, p. 5). In the process of educational reform during political democratization, it is the schools that are charged with safeguarding the necessary knowledge and skills for citizens to effectively engage in the responsibilities associated with a democratic political system. Furthermore, during periods of internationalization, the demands of cultivating national citizenship are compounded by the expectations of the international organizations that legitimize the newly democratic state through membership and socialization. In the present case, in their aspiration to become members of an expanded European Union, the Albanian government has authorized the harmonization of policies that promote education for European and global citizenship. Within this frame, teachers are again charged as agents of change (responsible for guiding students through the process of political transformation) as well as guarantors of continuity (ensuring that educational goals are met and standards are maintained).

As pivotal intermediaries between educational authorities, students, and their families and communities, teachers also play a crucial role in localizing global educational models. In this chapter, I argue that while national policy makers and international policy documents prescribe various normative identities for teachers, the teachers themselves interpret and respond to these constructions in diverse ways, thus authoring their own sense of identity through their situated educational practice. In this way as well, they become agents of both change and continuity.

Teachers' role in the knowledge economy. Alongside the political and social transformation discussed above, the reshaping of the Albanian economy from a planned socialist system to a market-based capitalist system is another significant regime of change that envelops teachers. Over the past two decades, the Albanian government has increasingly adopted internationally-sanctioned frameworks for education reform – in particular, the World Bank's Educational Excellence and Equity Project and the National Strategy for Development and Integration – aligning national policy objectives with international and pan-European goals, principles, and benchmarks. As I show in previous chapters, these policies are predicated on particular assumptions and prescriptions that have important implications for Albanian teachers.

For example, from the vantage point of leading international agencies such as the World Bank, teachers and schools occupy a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the internationally legitimated skills and capacities necessary for participating in the global exchange processes of the contemporary knowledge economy. According to 2005 World Bank documents:

In the contemporary knowledge economy, knowledge management is seen as the key to the flexibility of operations [...]. The implicit challenge is that knowledge of teaching is for the most part tacit, difficult to articulate and systematize, and strictly practical and context based. These characteristics reinforce the traditional isolation of teachers and schools, making the transfer and full utilization of knowledge very difficult. In short, teacher education institutions, schools as organizations, and education systems in general are still very far from meeting the needs of a knowledge-management society. (pp. 107-110)

Thus, as national policy makers align themselves with prescribed international standards, contestation over the efficacy and legitimacy of teachers' tacit knowledge comes to the forefront in debates over global and local approaches to educational reform.

As I outlined in Chapter III, international experts have adopted the notion of *competences* to frame, describe, and measure teacher and student ability and performance as well as to support the further rationalization of national education systems. Competences (sometimes called *competencies*) have become the principle unit of analysis within the international community's approach to standardizing educational reforms for the global market economy. Experts defined key competences for education as those "that enable individuals to participate effectively in multiple contexts or social fields and that contribute to an overall successful life for individuals and to a well-functioning society (i.e. lead to important and valued individual and social outcomes)" (Rychen and Tiana, 2004, p. 22). Yet World Bank and OECD experts recognize that in specific local contexts, these broad and abstract conceptual goals meet with significant challenges in their adoption and implementation. World Bank officials have even found "a profound mismatch" between the new key competencies demanded of learners in the knowledge society and the particular skills that teachers acquire from teacher training colleges and in-service training programs; as noted above, "The new competencies clearly require that teachers behave in classrooms in a way contrary to the training they receive" (WB, 2004a cited in WB, 2005, pp. 106-107). Such a gap, whether substantive or rhetorical, demands further investigation and explanation.

Teachers' situated forms of knowledge. In contrast to the technical rationality of expertise exemplified by the World Bank's prescriptive educational models, I found that Albanian teachers' experiential knowledge was predicated upon alternative cultural norms and beliefs. For example, the importance of relationships as an aspect of their perceived role, identities, and situated practice was a central theme. Rather than speaking about their

independence and autonomy, the teachers in this study spoke of their complex and interconnected relationships with school directors, peers, students, families and community members. Such proximity to colleagues, students, and authorities was at times a source of conflict, but nonetheless provided an inescapable facet of their professional situation.

In contrast to the idealistic and future-oriented values embedded in international competences, the teachers also spoke about how the past shaped and informed their current teaching practice. Although they considered their role as contributing to the development of future democratic citizens, they nonetheless relied heavily on lessons learned in the past to help them make sense of their professional roles and identities. Related to this, I found that the teachers also approached their pedagogical work within a complex relational web that relied on reciprocity and inter-dependence rather than a unidirectional and linear transmission of information. In contrast, international models of teaching based on standardized competences portrayed learning as discretely defined, linear, and quantitatively measurable. Learning is to be transmitted in one direction – from the teacher to the student – in distinct units or curriculum modules that comprise key competencies. Either students master the competency or they do not. Either the teacher possesses the requisite abilities to teach the material or she does not. Competences, rather than teachers' knowledge and expertise, thus serve as the divisive instrument that differentiates valid from extraneous curricular content and measures student and teacher performance.

Finally, the value-laden foreign emphasis on “reflection”, critical interrogation of knowledge, and “social maturity” positioned teachers to perform in ways that contradicted their own experiential knowledge and expertise. If we interrogate the underlying assumptions of these Western cultural norms, we can identify their roots in an ideal-type environment in which

teachers and learners are able to “distance themselves from social pressures, take different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their actions” (OECD, 2005, p. 9). Yet the realization of these normative ideals would necessitate a significant shift in circumstances for Albanian teachers. For instance, teachers would need sufficient time and training to enable them to reflect upon and analyze aspects of their daily practice. They would also require ample access to multiple and opposing viewpoints and a variety of resources with which to cross-check and verify information. If such alternative materials and resources were readily available, teachers would then require a level of autonomy to view, compare, and select a diverse range of curricular materials. And finally, they would need to experience a level of intellectual and economic freedom and independence from family members, political associates, peers, and authorities in order to conduct balanced assessments and to make their own isolated decisions without concern for repercussions or negative consequences.

My study, however, did not identify any of these underlying and enabling conditions in the day to day realities of Albanian teachers. On the contrary, I found that their circumstances were defined by limited access to a relatively small array of resources, a dearth of time and guidance for “reflecting” on their practice, and direct and subtle forms of discouragement for any practice of applying a critical stance towards official sources of knowledge such as curricula and textbooks. Thus, far from the ideal conditions in which the international key competences were conceptualized and defined, the Albanian teachers in this study employed experiential knowledge based on their situated practice within an entirely different configuration of educational constraints and opportunities.

In the face of this significant conceptual gap, the powerful work of James C. Scott (1998) provides an alternative way of analyzing teachers’ multi-faceted sources of knowledge and

expertise. As noted in previous chapters, his concept of “*metis*” illuminates the importance of the practical, experiential, and taken-for-granted knowledge of key actors. Scott argues that the forceful application of a generic external framework based on technical knowledge and rationality is almost always doomed to fail because “any formula that excludes or suppresses the experience, knowledge, and adaptability of *metis* risks incoherence and failure” (1998, p. 319). The concept of *metis* as a situated form of knowledge that is derived from practice thus provides a useful counter-point to the more generic externally legitimated encapsulation of knowledge and practice into key competences.

Nuances of teachers’ situated knowledge and practice are further illuminated through Larry Cuban’s (1984; 1986) construct of teachers’ “situationally constrained choices.” In his exploratory analysis of “how teachers taught” during the period between 1890 and 1980 in the United States, Cuban (1984) found that teachers favored constancy over change in the introduction of new progressive models of student-centered education. In some cases, mostly among “veteran” teachers, Cuban also found that teachers developed “hybrid” practices that intermixed both teacher- and student- centered approaches. Cuban then offered five plausible arguments for his findings, summarized below:

1. Because schooling is a form of social control and sorting, we see more stability than change in pedagogical practices;
2. School and classroom structures determined how teachers chose to allocate their time and energy when considering pedagogical change; thus, they “constructed certain teaching practices that have emerged as resilient, simple, and efficient solutions in dealing with a large number of students in a small space for extended periods of time” (1984, 242);

3. A culture of teaching was embedded in these teachers' daily practice and this culture included a resistance to change and preferences for establishing reliable, durable routines that accomplished their goals over time;
4. Teachers' ideas and beliefs, individual and shared, about child development, the purpose of schooling, authority, and classroom practice shaped what teachers chose to do (including which aspects of teaching they were willing to change) in their classrooms; and
5. In some cases, inconsistent or "feckless" implementation of reform policies accounted for the dominance of consistency over change in teachers' practice (1984, p. 245).

After examining these possible explanations in more depth, Cuban (1984) ultimately developed a synthesis of these five aspects into what he deemed the "situationally constrained choice" that teachers made. For Cuban, situationally constrained choice consisted of the inter-relationship between school structures and teachers' beliefs bound together in the teachers' culture of teaching. He explained,

The constraints, pressures, and channeling that the school and classroom contexts generate is the invisible, encompassing environment that few recognize potentially shapes what teachers do daily in classrooms.[...] Within this organizational framework, the culture of teaching, itself shaped by structural arrangements, further funnels both newcomers and veterans into teaching regularities that folk wisdom reinforces as essential for classroom survival. (Cuban, 1984, p. 250)

Thus, through his nuanced construct of situationally constrained choice, Cuban explains why more constancy than change characterized teaching practice during this period of progressive education reform. His compelling notion of teachers' situationally constrained choice provides a

valuable conceptual and analytic tool to help make sense of the Albanian teachers' responses to local and global pressures as expressed in their narratives below.³²

Teacher Vignettes

Democracy High School³³

In the cold month of February 2009, I followed a labyrinth of narrow and muddy dirt roads tucked away behind the major avenues of Albania's capital city, Tirana. I came upon a sturdy rectangular concrete building enclosed behind a tall gray metal fence. The sign on the school indicated that this was Eda's workplace: **Democracy High School**. As the guard opened the gate for my assistant Sihana and me, we were escorted through the modest concrete courtyard, past the proud bust of the school's symbolic mascot, a martyred hero of the end of the

³² In contrast to Cuban, Deborah Britzman aims to disentangle the notion of a teacher's culture from her analysis of the complexity of schools. In her ethnography, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, Britzman argues,

To speak and act as if there is one monolithic culture of teachers, students, or schools is to take up a discourse that is at once authoritative and impossible. Within any given culture, there exists a multiplicity of realities—both given and possible—that form competing ideologies, discourses, and the discursive practices that are made available because of them. [...] Just as culture is always in the process of being reinvented, renegotiated, and reinterpreted by its participants, so too are the signifying practices of school life. (2003, p. 71)

Despite her critique of the term "culture of teaching," I believe there is still room for Cuban's construct in understanding the Albanian teachers' practice. For, just what are the "signifying practices of school life" that Britzman so eloquently references? They are both habitual (perhaps tacitly selected) and spontaneously deployed acts and gestures that teachers perform in their work negotiating the array of factors they encounter in classrooms, schools, and in relation to the various actors within these contexts. If "culture" can be understood as comprised by "identities, desires, and investments" that are "mobilized, constructed, and reworked," (Britzman, 2003, p. 71), then teachers most certainly participate in it. For Cuban, the "culture of teaching" is precisely that amalgam of familiar repertoires, beliefs, and "folk wisdom" that teachers gain through their ongoing practice (1984, p. 250). Neither monolithic nor stagnant, this culture of teaching is part of what is learned and internalized through the collective experience of teaching within the particular local social and political structure of schooling.

³³ Schools and teachers have been assigned pseudonyms to protect participant confidentiality and anonymity.

communist dictatorship, and into the bustling school. Along the walls to my right were boards with information about the heroic life of this mascot. To my left, a small gathering space provided a pleasant foyer. Directly ahead were the stairs leading to second floor classrooms and computer lab, as well as the Director's office. At the end of the short hallway, off to the right, I was guided into the teachers' lounge where instructors gathered for a smoke in between classes or during their prep period. I met Eda there. As she linked my arm and smiled a warm welcome, we marched upstairs to greet her class.

Eda was a well composed middle-aged teacher with a warm smile and a pleasant, slightly nervous, disposition. As head of the social science department in this small upper secondary school, Eda held a lot of responsibility. She had nearly 30 years of experience as a teacher, and she had worked hard throughout the trying years under the communist system to gain a solid reputation. After our first meeting, Eda seemed to adopt me and want to share with me and my assistant, Sihana, all of her experience as a professional teacher and leader in her school. She did not hide the trials and challenges she faced. As we see in the passages below, her experience as an educator was filled with bitter *and* sweet moments.

Eda's example illuminates the complexity of the teacher's role amid the many changes underway in the Albanian education system and society at large. Often feeling exhausted as she rushed from one class hour to the next, Eda was involved in many aspects of school life. In addition to serving as the social science department chair, Eda took time to tutor students who needed extra help and served on a committee to select new textbooks for the school. She shared some of the challenges of her role as well as the rewards. In particular, her concerns included garnering students' respect in the classroom, struggling to motivate students whom she felt were

both academically less gifted and apathetic, and negotiating the wider uncertainty of her position in the wake of political appointments and upheavals.

During our interview sessions, I sat with Eda and my assistant Sihana in a loud and smoky local coffee shop right outside the gates of Democracy High School. Eda began our first interview by recounting her many years of teaching experience spanning back to the days when her subject area was “the History of the Party”. She noted,

Before, the teaching methods were very limited, the teacher did not have such freedom. At that time, students were not allowed to move in the class, so I had a problem with my colleagues yelling at me about why the students were not at their chairs. Back then, there was the idea that the students should stay very strict and in a formal way during class. But according to me, these are the real lessons, where the students are allowed to move, to work as a group, to argue with each other, to exchange their experience, and very soon they understood that I was making them think and get more involved in the lessons.

Under communism, Eda’s early days as a teacher were challenging because she and her husband had been sent far from her hometown, where she considered herself an “outsider”. While she was teaching “the party's history” to teachers at the University, she also took a job at what she considered the best high school in the large northern town. She stayed as an instructor at this school for 15 years, during which time she held “two important jobs at the same time” – one as a full time mother, the other as a teacher who had to work at the best school in a “foreign and unknown city.” Ultimately, Eda felt she had to prove herself over and over again. She recounted:

I was the youngest teacher in the collective, most of them were men. We were only five women and they were like my mothers, much older than me, and I was the youngest of them. And this was a real challenge for me, because I had to win that job over and over again, trying to be the best so I would not get fired. I had a successful career, I believe, and I also got a prize in [the town]. I got the “Naim Frasheri” medal prize. Can you believe that? I was an outsider, and totally alone in [the town] and that meant a lot to me.

Eda's feeling that she was an "outsider" and "totally alone" speak to the isolation she felt without close friends and family nearby. In their early years as mothers and working professionals, most Albanian women would rely on extended family members to share the burdens of their intense jobs. Yet due to the political re-location of her family to a northern town, Eda did not have the luxury of this family support. In addition, she was unknown to the community members in a time and cultural context in which community trust and acceptance were predicated upon knowing the reputation of your extended family members. In the absence of these familial networks, Eda relied heavily on the school community as a form of extended support. Yet, even there, she felt she had to constantly earn her reputation. Thus, Eda's early days as a teacher proved both a nurturing and a very competitive experience. While she was the darling of the older teachers, she nonetheless felt her job was constantly at stake if she was unsuccessful in any way. Her description of those early years was thus rife with feelings of anxiety and isolation mixed with a sense of pride based on her endurance and professional success.

When the Communist system began to weaken and eventually collapse, Eda welcomed the influx of foreigners to lend their wisdom and assistance to the teachers. She was pleased to receive numerous certificates after participating in different seminars with foreign professors from England and the United States. She noted that, "Some professors that had experience at the private high schools in America trained us not only on the teaching methods but also on how to manage the budgets. They taught us how to use the students' free time for the best results. I was very impressed by the idea that the students would work during their free time at the school's big garden. They would do some work, like planting flowers, which they would sell at the end." Eda

embraced the chance to learn, and tried to apply these new ideas in her classes and the school as a whole.

When she finally re-located to Tirana in 1997, she first worked for several years at a difficult school in the periphery zone of the city before her move to Democracy High School. At the periphery school, she rose to the rank of vice-principal of the school while she continued teaching students in the social sciences. She also was very pleased to work with the “Roma Association” because there were increasing numbers of Roma and Egyptian³⁴ minority students coming to the school. Noting that she was “happy to help them,” she explained that the families coming in from the villages were at very low economic and educational levels; however, “they had a lot of respect for the teacher.” At her current school, Democracy High School, Eda was frustrated that while the socio-economic level of the parents was much higher, “they are too indifferent to the teachers and also towards their children” and always seemed to imply that the teacher was asking too much of their time. She felt the parents in the center came up with excuses, such as being too busy at work, to participate in the school life. She explained, “When we organized the parents’ meeting here, only few of them are interested and come, but at the [periphery high school], they were all coming, maybe because most of them were unemployed.”

Eda enjoyed the parental involvement and the emphasis placed on education at the periphery school, and she probably would have stayed there for a longer period. However, in 2007, when she was named as one of the Vice Directors of the school, she was summarily fired. She recounted:

³⁴ Roma and Egyptians are a main minority groups within Albania. As ethnic groups, the Roma and Egyptians are often conflated; however, Egyptians claim that their origin is ancient Egypt rather than India, and they do not speak Romani. The total number of Roma and Egyptian individuals living in Albania is contested internally and externally. According to a 2002-2003 World Bank study, estimates of the combined Roma and Egyptian population ranged from 10,000 to over 200,000 or from 0.3% to 6% of the Albanian population.

I was a vice-principal at this school, but after that I got fired for no reason, as did the other four directors (one principal and 3 vice-principal) even though I did not have any political view. Only the directors got fired, not the teachers. Then the four of us were transferred to other schools and worked as teachers.

Although she did not seem particularly angry or resentful about this demotion and forced relocation, there was a persistent sense of insecurity throughout Eda's narrative. She often hinted that there was really no job security for her even though she worked very hard in her profession.

Eda had been involved for two years with a local Foundation's project for conflict resolution in the school. Indeed, Democracy High School was known to be a pilot school for many such projects during the last two decades in Albania. Placards hung on the main upper hallway of the school depicting the various projects that the school was involved in. The student government was an active organization and a group of students was also involved in a project that partnered with local political parties for community improvement efforts. I did not hear about these activities from Eda, but rather viewed the information on the walls of the school and on the school's internet homepage.

Due to her departmental leadership and her participation in a number of projects in the school, Eda was chosen to participate in this conflict resolution project and to become a mediator and trainer. She embraced this role, and recounted:

The problem was a very beautiful problem that was presented by the Foundation for Conflict Resolution. Six teachers of this school were trained, I was one of them, and we created a group; a mediator group- for solving the conflicts in the school. The teachers who were trained themselves trained a group of students as mediators. The teachers were very careful in choosing the students, they should have had a good professional knowledge in order to be able to face the problem and solve it. The students should have been calm and patient; with a good reputation, so their voice could be heard.

My role was as a Manager. When there were conflicts involving teachers, I personally interfered as a mediator, if they would choose me as a mediator, but usually we were solving the conflicts with teachers, with each other, or with parents. At the end, they would write the agreement or "memo of understanding". This was very important, because, for example, if the court solved the conflict, they would say you are right and

you are wrong and so punish one individual; but the mediator should reconcile them; both of them would win- this is the best solution. In this way, not only was there a win-win situation, but it also prevented other conflicts, so they would be more friendly than before with each other.

Eda was proud of these extra-curricular activities and noted that during competitions with other schools, her students received numerous awards. She felt that equipping students and teachers with the ability to solve their own conflicts was an important step that contributed to her wider goals as a social science teacher. As she explained,

Since I am a social science teacher, my main goal is to prepare students to be good democratic citizens. I aim for them to accept pluralism, to accept the others' opinion even though it might be different from theirs, to accept fair competition. In another way, I want for them to be ready to face their life. I want them to solve conflicts with tolerance not with violence. In Albania we are facing a lot of violence, starting with the violence toward females, mothers, and children. If these kids see violence at their home, they are going to try to do that also, that is why I want them to learn to solve conflicts with tolerance and respect.

In addition to her goals to educate for democratic citizenship, Eda also embraced strong academic values and goals for her students. In this area, however, she felt disappointed with the students' performance. She discussed how with increasing choice for the secondary level, students who were not that interested in academics were still choosing the social science track because they felt it was easier than the hard science track. Yet, she argued, there was actually a contradiction that students did not understand, and she lamented ending up with many students whom she felt were unmotivated. She shared,

In these days, it is very difficult to be a teacher, because most of the students are not really interested in school. I believe most of the students made wrong decisions applying for high school while they had a very low average (average 5- almost failing) at the 9-year school. To ask to study in a high school with such a low average, it is unbearable. Even though they are not interested, they are still going to school, and think: "Ok, it was easy to get here so let me pass one more year and see what we can do with it."

Eda then explained how the top performing students tended to select the physical sciences track for upper secondary school. The majority of students, who performed at a much lower level, thus fell into the social sciences. For Eda, a close examination of this situation revealed an unfortunate paradox. She explained,

If we look more carefully here, we have a contradiction, because in the social science class, the students will have to read a lot, because they have to study the literature, but they have this idea that in these classes there is no need to study much compared to the natural science classes. This kind of student doesn't feel like studying or working, so it does not surprise me much that they have low grades and the maximum average that they can get is 6 or 6.5 [out of 10], no higher than that. We have a totally different situation at the natural science class, where all the best students are and the average is high.

Eda further described how she dealt with this paradox. First, she felt strongly that students of such low academic motivation and ability should be tracked into professional and vocational schooling. She suggested that a process of tracking students in this way would be professionally advantageous for the students and better for the Albanian economy as well. She argued,

These low students need to get a trade that will prepare them to work in hotels, tourism, as a mechanic, etc. High school does not give the students a profession, it just prepares them for university, but since the low level students don't study, they can't go to university, so it's like they have past 4 years of their life for nothing, just staying and passing time.

Here in Albania almost 70% of the students go to high school and only 30% go at the professional/vocational schools. But we need electricians, engineers. There are some students in high school that are failing all the time, it has been like 6 years now and still they are not passing the class. In this way, they are not going to get any profession, but only a general knowledge, even though most of the time they are not interested at all for this general knowledge. If we measure how much this category of students has lost or won by going to high school, I believe they have been losing much more than winning. First of all, they lose the years because they are failing the class many times, and they can't finish high school within 4 years. But if they would think smart, instead of losing 6 years and not achieving anything, they should have gone to a vocational school and in 3 years, they would learn a specific professional trade.

Despite her impassioned belief that students were making the wrong choices and ultimately wasting their own time, Eda nonetheless tried to reach some of the lower performing students. When I asked how she saw her role as a teacher in the face of such low motivation and performance, she explained her pedagogical approach:

To motivate this kind of students, we teachers have to use certain methods to attract and make them interested to the lesson. But it is very difficult to make them react, and to make them work in groups. Sometimes I motivate them to work also individually, with homework, projects and small projects. They usually like the extra-curricular period / free hour class where they go outside the school building. Today they were very excited to go outside and could not wait to walk on the streets and to observe the traffic. They were very happy when we went last time to the law court. They love this kind of activity because they don't have to work or study, they just need to observe. They don't have the will and motivation for studying.

Eda's first strategy for stimulating students' motivation was thus to involve them in participatory, extra-curricular, student-centered activities that took them out of the classroom and into the community. Eda saw this approach as largely devoid of academic merit, but she knew that it engaged and excited her students. Ironically, such a hands-on, applied process of teaching and learning was precisely the kind of pedagogical approach advocated by international models of democratic citizenship education promoted by organizations such as the Council of Europe. Yet for Eda, the students' embrace of these strategies merely reinforced her belief that they lacked the will and motivation to do the hard work of reading and studying academic texts, like she had done as a student and young professional so many years before.

Eda's second strategy for motivating her students was through her own modeling and demonstration of good behavior. For Eda, one of the primary responsibilities of the teacher was to serve as a role model, both socially and academically. She explained:

The teacher should be respected and with discipline. For example, I never came late at school and the students understand that and try to follow my example. We can educate them better by being an example, instead of just talking to them. As a teacher, I can talk

to them all the time about the rules and how to respect one another, but still I believe it is more useful and important to be a model to them, so they could follow you, it is more understandable this way. What they see, they will remember for a long period of time.

Yet, despite this fairly traditional approach to serving as a role model for her students, Eda also understood that the times were changing and that her students' lives were quite different from the life she led as a young student. Uncharacteristically of teachers of her generation, she described herself as a "skeptic" who was open to learning new things and being taught by her students. She explained:

Both of us, students and teachers, give and learn from each other all the time. We teachers also try to adopt and learn from our students too, because they belong to a new generation and know so many new things that we don't know. I am not with the idea that the teacher knows everything about everything, but I like to think of myself as more of a skeptic; in this way I try and I want to learn new things, because not everything I know or do might be right or correct. I try to teach these things to my students as well, even to the best ones, that not everything he or she knows is right, but we should always be in a learning process. I try to teach them, to look for the best part of the other people, to see what is good and positive about them.

This discussion surprised me a bit because it portrayed her teaching style as based on reciprocity and mutual respect with the students rather than a more teacher-centered and text-centric approach. Yet our interview took place only a day after I had observed a very challenging class. During the classroom observation, which is described below, I was struck that the students were so incredibly disrespectful to Eda, and that she too got so exasperated with them. When I delicately reminded her about this difficult class from the previous day, I asked how she was able to cope with such an unruly classroom. She replied reflectively:

It is very true, it is very hard. But somehow I can't blame them, because life here is like this. If we turn on the television, we see the political people talking all at the same time and they don't have much respect for each other. The students are surrounded by this kind of life and communication. I try to teach them to listen to each other first, then to talk because in this way by listening you create an idea about what to say and also respecting the opinions of others. Sometimes because they know something or they have the right

answer, they all want to say it at the same time- they think this is good because they say the correct answer, even though by doing this, they don't show respect. I am *ok* with expressing yourself, for discussing, but everyone at a time, one by one.

This somewhat compassionate perspective on the difficulties of being a teacher and a learner amid the social and political climate that she experienced helped to explain some of the seeming contradictions in Eda's beliefs and pedagogical practices. On the one hand, she expressed the strong conviction that most of her students lacked the desire and ability to successfully fulfill the requirements of an academically oriented secondary school program. She blamed this reality on the poor choices that they made personally, but also on the structure of schooling that did not effectively track lower performing students into vocational schools. She did not express the belief that the low performance of her students was in any way a reflection or measure of her teaching performance.

The next seeming contradiction was in her pedagogical approach to motivating these difficult students. Eda found that the students were excited and engaged by participatory, extra-curricular lessons such as a fieldtrip to the courts to study the legal system. While these were precisely the kind of activities prescribed by international models for citizenship education, Eda believed that they engaged students because they provided a distraction from true scholarship. Student engagement in extra-curricular learning activities thus reinforced her belief that students were both unmotivated and unfit for the rigors of the academic program.

Finally, the third paradox presented by Eda's case was that she believed one of the core aspects of her role as a teacher was being an example and role model for respectful, effective communication and behavior. Eda explained these issues in both traditional and non-traditional ways. In the first case, she described showing respect as being on time and not speaking out of turn. But unlike the cultural norms of her own generation, she spoke about being skeptical and

recognizing that no one has all the answers. She admitted that she had much to learn from students of a new generation, and that the students themselves were growing up in a tumultuous political environment that in some ways justified their unruly behavior. Despite this position however, Eda failed to address the irony of her words in the face of her own angry and exasperated interaction with students during the classroom observation described below.

Classroom observation at Democracy High School. The day before one of our last interviews, we met with Eda in her junior year classroom. The class was just beginning a unit on traffic safety as part of the new curriculum area of “life skills”. When we entered the classroom together, Eda announced: “Today, we are going to begin a very easy chapter- we are going to talk about the traffic rules.” Then she had to leave the classroom for few moments, and the students immediately started talking and joking around in the class. When Eda returned, she was furious about all that noise and it seemed very hard for her to calm the students down.

“Next time,” she said through all the noise, “We are going to see the traffic rules at ‘21-shi’ and ‘Myslym Shyri’ [a busy traffic intersection near the school]. Oh come on now, do I have to throw some of you out of the class, in order for everybody else to be calm? You should be very ashamed of yourself, we have guests here today and you show no respect. Shame on you all.” Eda seemed very angry and spoke loudly to the students. Several times, she hit her desk demanding silence in the class. Going back to the lesson, she said: “What are the traffic rules that we all should know? Why it is important for us to walk at the white lines? Do you use the sidewalk?”

While the students were answering these simple questions all yelling out at once, Eda turned to a boy and said angrily to him: “When are you going to learn every lesson, from lesson

number 1 till the end? Only then will you pass this school year.” Turning back to the class as if nothing had happened, Eda continued with the lesson from the textbook. “We should be very careful while we walk because when there is a car accident, the driver is not always the only one with the fault. It is a 50%-50% chance. We should pay attention at the streets with insufficient lighting. Also, when we have to cross a street where there are no white lines, we should always make sure the drivers are seeing us before crossing the road. When it comes to the crossroads, we should always look at the traffic-lights, and if there is none, we should follow the instructions of the policeman.” “What if the policeman is drunk?” called out a male student from the back, and everybody except Eda started to laugh.

Eda pretended like she did not hear this interruption and went on with the lesson: “Village roads are very dangerous, because usually Albanian villages don't have lights at all, so we always need to carry a little light with us, or to make light with our cellphone. We should walk straight and not in groups. It is preferred to wear white clothes, in order for the driver to distinguish us. Now, we are not going to learn here how to drive a car, for that you will need a special school, but I want to teach you how to be careful while passing the bus. Usually, most accidents happen while crossing the street in front of the bus.”

Eda got frustrated with the class once again and shouted loudly, “I have been yelling at you since the beginning of the lecture, and you still don't stop. Don't you have a little respect and patience?” The class quieted down for a moment. Eda then started to read some questions and show some traffic pictures from the textbook to the students. She directed them to work individually with exercise number 1. She divided the class in three groups. The other groups had to work on True or False exercises from the book. While the students were supposed to be working, she gave an example on how we should walk on the streets. She took two girl students,

and physically showed how we should walk and act in various street situations. At this point, we dropped our eyes and happened to notice that on our desk in the back corner of the room, the words, “Fuck the school” were carved into the wood in English.

The time was up and the groups had to answer the questions. The group reports were sloppy with everybody talking at the same time and loudly. Again, Eda got very frustrated and started to shout loudly: “Stop, shut up, people without respect. And you girls are acting like hornets ... just talking, talking, talking!! STOP, quiet.”

The class ended, the bell rang, and Eda started to scream at one boy who was near the front of the class by that time: “Damn you, you scoundrel [*maskara*], this was one day, only one day that there are people here to observe our class, and you could not be quiet or act as a normal student. Why are you being so disrespectful? And don't say sorry to me now, I don't care. I don't need your apology now. Shame on you, you all disappointed me.”

A number of factors contributed to the disarray we observed that day at Democracy High School. First, it was clear that because Eda saw herself as a role model and exemplary teacher, our presence in the classroom heightened her expectations of student behavior. Like many other teachers we observed, Eda wanted to put on a good show for the visitors, and she was furious that the students behaved so poorly during our observation. In this way, she took their disrespectful behavior very personally for it temporarily marred her reputation. But in addition to the elevated expectations, the curriculum itself was another factor that contributed to the frustrating class. Eda found the lesson basic and easy; thus, she felt the students would like it. She announced at the outset of the class that the topic was an easy one and that the following class would include a fieldtrip. Based on her interview, it is likely she thought these

announcements would please the students and encourage their cooperation. But they had the opposite effect. The lesson, based on the text, fueled their ridicule. They too seemed to think the material was simplistic and not worthy of their active attention. Their repeated outbreaks of mockery made it clear that the students were not serious about that lesson at that time. In contrast, when we observed another of Eda's classes on a different day, we witnessed a playful mock trial that the students, though animated, took quite seriously. But on this day, the graffiti on the desk, students' casual use of electronic devices (when they knew the teacher could see them), and, in general, their rowdy antics all signaled a kind of boredom and disengagement with the course material, and perhaps the school as a whole. By the end of the class, Eda was exhausted, flustered, and visibly angry. But by the next day, she had regained her composure and had shifted the responsibility of the failed class onto the society at large, noting that she could not blame the students "because life here is like this."

To get an alternative perspective on teaching and learning at Democracy High School, I also interviewed and observed another teacher in the Sociology Department. Sonila, a younger, but equally busy teacher with 17 years of experience, discussed her beliefs and approach to teaching about democracy and citizenship. Like Eda, Sonila seemed apologetic about the low level of the students' abilities. She felt the curriculum for democratic citizenship and civics was quite challenging for the students. For this reason, she attempted to make her lectures and classroom activities as "concrete and practical as possible, because the more practical it is, the easier and more understandable it is for them." She added that she didn't use difficult definitions or terminology. "The simpler, the better," she concluded.

Part of making the lessons simple meant that Sonila presented concrete points in her lectures and only asked students to memorize certain parts of the text. She explained that it was very difficult for the students to memorize “the factors that support and prevent democracy,” but “the students are also asked to learn by heart the factors that affect the society, individuals, and various institutions.” Sonila spoke at length about how she organized the lesson point by point in her notebook. “I try to teach them only the most important parts of the lesson, the ones that the students need the most, because even if I want to, I can't teach them everything or they can't learn everything,” she explained.

Sonila's approach to teaching and learning also involved an interactive pedagogy and group work. Like Eda, although there were traditional aspects to her teaching (such as requiring students to memorize part of the text), she also intentionally aimed to create a more student-centered environment where students learned from each other. For example, she discussed using “games, group projects, individual work, and various essays” to get students involved with the material. She gave an example of students writing an essay after *pretending* to interview government members. And while she felt that most students were engaged by such methods, she was also aware that a differentiated approach to teaching was useful in reaching the lower performing students. As she recounted:

During the group work, the students are not only listening to the teacher talking, but they also work among themselves, and this is a very good thing. I don't like that much the idea of me (the teacher) talking all the time and the student just to listening to me. I want them to work and not to stay indifferent during class. During the group work the students learn from each-other and what is more important, in this way they are able to learn the new lesson at class. My goal (especially during Sociology classes) is to make them learn, to know how to get the main points out of the lesson and to be active at class.

Sonila also described the academic levels of her students in very concrete terms, as if the levels were clearly established and set, with almost no mobility from one level to another. The

levels also corresponded to where students sat in the room (front or back) and how much they participated. Indeed, throughout my classroom observations in a number of schools, I noticed certain areas of the classroom that I coded as the “black hole” because the teacher completely ignored that area of the room, rarely looked to that area, and almost never interacted with the (usually male) students there. Likewise, the students who occupied the “black hole”³⁵ areas were either busy with their cell phones, goofing off with one another, or generally focused on something outside of the class. At times, these students also lacked materials such as notebooks, texts, paper, or writing utensils. Nonetheless, Sonila spoke of her attempts to reach all students in her classes:

In the class there are different levels of students: we have a low level of students who don't study much; a medium level of students; and very good students too, even though very few students are at that high level. For example, in my class of 40 students, only 10 of them are very good students. Eight to ten students are at the medium level, and the rest are all low level students. That is why at my school journal, I write and prepare the lesson in different ways, for different levels. This is because not every class has the same level of students, you know, different classes-different levels. For example, the class we observed yesterday was at a low level.

At the classes with a higher level of students, I use other methods which I write in the notebook. This is because every lesson I try to adapt to each class (for each level). But usually I do something in between, not too hard, but not too easy either. And usually the ones who don't talk are the lower level of students. What I usually do, is make them read the book at the class, and in this way by reading, they will learn at least the main concepts of the lesson. For example, these kinds of students don't even know what Democracy is, that is why I try to teach them at least the most elementary things, the basic things.

My goal is to make every student understand and learn the lesson. I want everybody to understand, not only the good students at the first seats. I want them all to be active together even though they are not at the same level, but I agree that the students who are at a low level need more motivation. I usually motivate them by asking questions: “You

³⁵ I chose the metaphor of the black hole because of the implication that a kind of vacuum existed in which teaching and learning were completely absent in those classroom spaces. The reference does not in any way indicate a racial or ethnic dimension to this phenomenon. I did not analyze the demographic characteristics of students in the “black hole” areas, but in general, the predominately male students in those areas were of the majority Albanian ethnic group.

and you get up and answer this question.” But most of the time they don’t know the answer, so they feel offended in front of the other students.

Thus, Sonila employed a very deliberate approach to her lesson planning taking into account her estimation of students’ motivation and ability levels. This approach valued active participation and group work, yet, at the end of the day, Sonila also stressed the core content that needed to be acquired either by memorization or through classroom discussion and assignments.

When we observed two of Sonila’s classes, however, we noticed two interesting aspects. First, during group work, the students continued to work individually in their seats in the “higher level” class. However, in what she called her lower level class, the students were more interactive, engaged, and responsive. They seemed better prepared with the course material than her previous class, and they asked questions that demonstrated their curiosity about the topics. In the “higher” level class, we saw more of a structured delivery of material by the teacher and a core group of “good” students echoing her words with what seemed like well-rehearsed responses. This observation made me wonder again on what basis the teachers determined students to be of a high or low level.

During her lessons, we also noticed that Sonila referred to her students as “teacher” when she addressed them. We asked about the significance of this practice, and she explained that she used the word “mesuese” [“teacher”] in a caring tender way so that “the students feel loved.” Sonila then described how her pedagogy was based on nurturing this positive teacher-student relationship:

In this way they are not shy with me, but feel closer to me. I usually say: ‘What do you think mesuese [teacher]?’ In short, I want to make them fall for me. The students don’t like a teacher that is too conservative or harsh or the authority talking. I don’t want to be a policeman in the class, but to feel free, open and comfortable with my students. Communication is very important. I have always used the same methods with my students. I believe that the teacher should follow these two tactics: pull and give. With

this I mean that the teacher should ask and expect a lot from the students, but also she sometimes needs to be tolerant. The student should not feel afraid; he/she should feel free.

Thus, Sonila's pedagogy revolved around engaging students of various levels through different instructional strategies. Academically, both she and Eda lamented that the majority of their students were what they considered a low level. Professionally, both teachers were quite concerned about their reputation and their relationships with students and school authorities. In terms of their role as a teacher, while Eda saw herself as an example and a role model, Sonila was more concerned that students "felt loved" and, in return, loved her back. I return to the discussion of their role and practice after the other vignettes.

Equality Middle School

Rozafa was a middle aged grade school teacher of History and Social education with nearly 30 years of teaching experience. While friendly and eager to talk about her teaching experience, Rozafa also exuded an air of caution and often cast sidelong glances over her shoulder to see who was around. Like Eda, she had participated in numerous trainings on educating for democracy, human rights, and conflict resolution since the early 1990s, and she was trained as a teacher trainer in conflict resolution as part of the Foundation's pilot project. Although Rozafa seemed confident about her position in the school, she nonetheless explained her initial hesitation in allowing me to observe her classes. As we walked from the bus stop to the café where we would conduct our interview, Rozafa told me about another teacher who allowed a foreigner to observe her classes and conduct some trainings without the explicit permission of the school director. This teacher was immediately fired, despite being a very

successful teacher. Rozafa seemed to share this story as a cautionary tale, and I was careful to secure the necessary paperwork and permission before initiating classroom observation.

Rozafa's school - **Equality Middle School** - was a fairly large, newly renovated school in the periphery zone of the capital city with over 600 students in first through ninth grade. When I visited the school in 2009, it was the first year that the ninth grade was added; previously the school had been an 8-year school. In fact, on the day of our first visit, when I had planned to observe classes, we learned that the Municipal Education Office had ordered a surprise exam be administered *that day* to test how the 9th graders were doing. Everyone was shaken by this sudden news of an examination, and, consequently, we were not able to attend the classes. When I asked the school director if this kind of thing occurred often, she hesitated briefly, and then stated that such exams were to be expected since the 9th year class was a recent change and had to be evaluated. But she seemed frazzled nonetheless, and we soon made arrangements to return another time.

When I was selecting schools to participate in my research project, I was repeatedly told that Equality Middle School was a “problem school” due to its diverse student population including a large percentage of Roma and Egyptian minorities and recent immigrants from the mountainous northern parts of the country. Yet Rozafa described the diversity of her students as a special quality of the school:

We have different kinds of students, with different backgrounds, students that came from the North, and we have Roma students who make up 26% of the school population, and 13% is Egyptians. But despite this, we cohabit pretty well together, without discrimination against each other. All this is thanks to the teachers and the hard and successful work that they have made. We have faced problems, I mean every school has problems, even the well-known schools from the center. In our school, we had to work and collaborate a lot with the parents because since they [the parents] come from the rural provinces, they have a very low level of education. Many organizations helped us, and some of them are still helping us to work with the parents. They also helped a lot in organizing the students, in creating the free extra hours.

Though teaching amid such differences posed many challenges, Rozafa was confident that there was no discrimination in her school and that students were all treated as equals. As we discussed her response to the numerous educational trainings related to human rights and democracy, Rozafa sounded comfortable and knowledgeable about the changes both in the Albanian educational system and in their implications for her teaching. She noted,

After 1996, the textbooks changed completely, and this was a really difficult time for us, the old teachers. We did not have any more socialism, I mean in a humanist way, in treating people equally, but we started to change our point of view about students -- before we tended to look at everybody in a capitalism–socialism way, but now we have new concepts about: market economy and respecting human rights. We knew in theory what human rights were and we were applying those rights, but later we learned that the true rights were when you gave the teachers and the students freedom to participate in every activity that was made; to give them equal rights and possibilities even though not everybody had the same capacity to do things, but at least they all had a chance to do those things. We passed this phase very quickly, thanks to the hard work that we were used to, our discipline, and our commitment.³⁶

Throughout our interviews, I asked Rozafa about how her role as a teacher changed during the past fifteen to twenty years and what was different about the kind of material she was teaching as part of the History and Social Education curricula. All of my questions probed at the intersection of her professional role, various sources of knowledge, and her pedagogical practice. As she spoke about these various issues, it became clear that Rozafa embraced the increasing internationalization of her subject areas as well as the growing diversity of her school’s student body. Like Eda and Sonila, she was quite aware of the key elements of new “student-centered” educational models including the importance of small group work and interactive lessons. In the

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excerpt below, she discussed these ideas as well as some of the particular local difficulties she faced in her school:

Before 1990, in my subject area of History, I was talking to my students about American Imperialism; but after 1990, the concept changed to the most democratic place in the world. My students in 8th grade know very well about the Marshall Plan, and of course all the names of every American president, starting from the first one till the last one, because this is how we study History. Even the fact that Obama became elected President influenced our students a lot; there is less skin color discrimination. Look at how much racial discrimination has disappeared, just because Obama- this black skin man- was elected as President.

Also in my Social Education class, the concepts of human rights and citizenship have influenced a lot. The students tend to learn these concepts by practicing them. The lessons as students: “Who am I?”- the students have to know themselves, to know how to work in groups; what's his role in the group; what rules he/she needs to follow in order for the group to be successful. And this helps a lot in every other subject, in order to learn how to be involved in various activities, and to give their best.

As I told you before, the first difficulty is having a large number of students in the class. The second one is the amount of student differences, because not all the classes have excellent students. We are facing difficulties especially when the students have to discuss and argue or give their own opinion on something because, nowadays, they are supposed to be all-included. Five or six years ago, these students did not have much at home. Now there are students who still don't have computers at home, even though they try to make it up by going often at the Internet centers and cafes.

As for us teachers, there have been some difficulties too, like before we could easily teach the theory, but the practice part was hard at the beginning. Even nowadays some people are asking me: “How can you do this? This is very difficult to do. How can you be so good?” They usually say this when I do something new with my class. But I don't feel much pressure or difficulties because I have taught my students well, and I know that if I give them one idea, they will give me a lot more ideas in return and they do all the work by themselves. I have taught them and also helped with the practice.

Based on these interview responses, it seemed that Rozafa had adopted new educational ideas and practices in which she approached education as a student-centered participatory activity. Like Eda, she also hinted that teaching was often based on reciprocity since she also learned a lot from the students. Through her verbal embrace of concepts of human rights, democracy, equality, and non-discrimination, Rozafa's description of her role matched that of

reform policies calling for new models of pedagogical practice. Furthermore, she was confident that her participation in various locally and internationally sponsored trainings equipped her with knowledge of human rights and citizenship education principles and activities that she then discussed and utilized in her classes.

Yet, as I discuss in the next section, it became evident upon observation that her school was rife with legacies of the previous authoritarian era. Rozafa's cautionary tale quietly conveyed her pervasive sense of apprehension and mistrust regarding her school leadership. Her adoption of new norms and values for the "all inclusive" classroom was tempered by a visible awkwardness or neglect in addressing student differences, particularly among students of minority backgrounds and those with special needs. Ultimately, I found that within the microcosm of her classroom, the school's ubiquitous discourses of "equality" and "non-discrimination" seemed to render invisible the striking differences among students in terms of their economic, cultural, and ethnic background and identities, and their diverse ability levels.

Classroom observation at Equality Middle School.³⁷ When I observed Rozafa's 8th grade "free hour" (i.e. extra-curricular) class, she had prepared a special lesson on humanitarian action that had been adapted from a translated Red Cross handbook that she received as part of an NGO training.

My assistant Sihana and I followed Rozafa into the classroom and found our way to the back middle row, where we sat quietly. Initially, all eyes were on us and the students were very curious. But as Rozafa began the lesson, their attention shifted. She read a story about racial

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integration in American schools in the 1950s. Throughout her reading, most of the students sat quietly riveted by the story. A few students bounced around in their seats or looked absently around the room. Then, after reading the story to the class of thirty-five students, Rozafa divided the students into three working groups to develop questions about the story. While the students worked individually at their seats, she came back to talk to us.

Leaning in closely, Rozafa pointed to a boy sitting up in one of the front rows on the side and said he was “semure” meaning ill, and then twisted her hand next to her temple in a gesture that meant he was “mentally ill.” But, Rozafa said, “We let him stay in the class and we don’t bother him. We let him stay with the rest and we just treat him like every other student.” I had noticed the boy making strange expressions on his face throughout the reading.

In the next class, Rozafa repeated the same lesson with another set of students. Again, while the students were working, she came to talk with us in the back of the room. This time, she showed us her lesson plans written in a small notebook. She described the various steps and questions she prepared to ask students, and the main points of her lesson. I asked her why she selected this particular story to read. She said that the story of American de-segregation is relevant to her own school because of its diversity. She then explained that she made that connection clear at the end of the lesson by asking the students if this situation applies here and now.³⁸

Rozafa explained to us that in their school they have many Roma students. She noted, “We have two Roma students in this class” and then turning to her right, she pointed to two darker skinned girls seated at a nearby desk saying, “one” and then “two”, numbering them like

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that. She said that in the 5th and 6th grades, they have much more, maybe half the class. She seemed proud and said, so that the girls could hear, that they were very good students.

At the end of the class, Rozafa asked one of the Roma girls to say something about the school. The girl stood up at attention and stiffly said, “I have never experienced discrimination in this school.” The other Roma girl next to her did not say anything, and the class ended.

As I reflected on this experience in Rozafa’s school, I was reminded once again of the repertoire of teacher and student performances that I had observed in many Albanian schools. Like Eda, Rozafa wanted to “look good” in front of her visitors. Like Sonila, she wanted me to see her lesson planning notebook and recognize her professionalism. Most likely, they also showed their notebooks in this same way to the Municipal Inspectors who came to evaluate their teaching performance. Similarly, when students were asked questions by their teachers during our visits, most of them stood up at attention and delivered what appeared to be well-rehearsed responses for our benefit. Yet the context at Rozafa’s school was quite different from the others.³⁹

The underlying perception of her school as a “problem school” seemed to pervade all our interactions. Everyone in the school felt the need to explain to me how they addressed the issue of diversity, and the main approach was in their policies of “non-discrimination,” inclusion, and treating everyone equally. Even the school’s brochure attested to the school’s focus on equality. Yet for Rozafa, it seemed that the emphasis on equality was paradoxically reinforcing the school’s inequalities. For example, by letting the boy with “special needs” stay in her class

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without getting outside help, she left him exposed to ridicule, exclusion, and academic isolation. Granted, there were very few resources for students with special needs in any school in Albania in 2009, but the policy of inclusion in this case enabled his needs to be completely ignored. This was also the case for another boy who Rozafa explained had recently arrived from Northern Albania. He sat in the class looking absently about and did not have a pen, paper, textbook, or anything at his desk. Despite the class being at the 8th grade level, I am not sure whether this boy could read. And yet, he was basically left on his own in the class I observed.

The situation of the Roma students was more complex, and I could not generalize about that from our small set of classroom observations. However, it was clear in the observation described above that the girls were in fact singled out in a way that other mainstream Albanian students were not. For the one student, just the fact of being addressed as she was in front of the visitors to report on her experience in the school highlighted this student's difference. These perceptions were reinforced by the following observation of another teacher's classroom practice.

Observation of music class with Rozafa's colleague. My assistant and I returned to Equality Middle School one day to meet Rozafa, but as we entered the school, she seemed in a rush and told us that she would present us to another teacher who was also part of the Foundation's conflict resolution training. This was our first time meeting the teacher named Valbona. She was young and friendly, smiling often. Rozafa asked her if we could go and observe one of her classes that day, and Valbona said, "Sure you can come. You will have a nice time in my class because I have an interesting lecture to teach today." She knew a bit of English and was eager to speak to us.

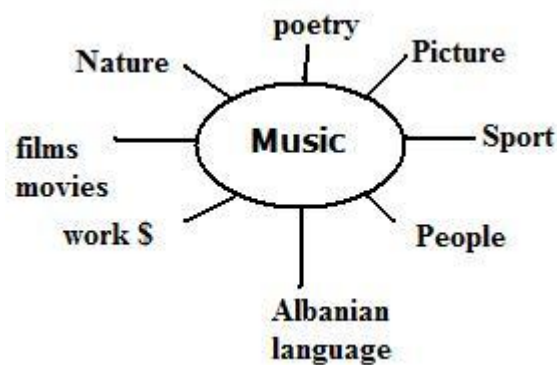
Valbona was teaching a 6th grade class. As Sihana and I were going to our usual place at the back of the classroom, we heard the students saying to each other: “Shhh, shut up, they are Americans.” This made us wonder if somehow the students knew we were coming, even though it was a surprise to us. Valbona started to talk about Mozart because in the last lesson in the “Albanian Language 6” book, there was a story named “the little genius” about Mozart. As homework, the students had to collect as much information as they could about Mozart and Beethoven. This information would have to come from the internet because there was no public library or other place for resources of this kind in the school. Because not every student had internet, we were not sure how they were able to do this assignment.

Most students had their homework done and started proudly displaying the material on their school desks. The teacher asked each of them to summarize the information that they got. The teacher addressed each of the students and tried to encourage them by saying: Very good! A boy in the class read something about Mozart – he said that when he was still alive he created the “melody of death”. Then when Mozart died, at the ceremony of his death they played that melody. After that, Valbona started reading information that a student found about Mozart, in English. She was translating it to Albanian for her students. From the perspective of Sihana, the teacher was “showing off” for our benefit because there was nothing special about that information.

After reading some more of the students’ findings from the Internet, Valbona asked her students who knew how to play music? Immediately the students all pointed to a small thin dark skinned boy who was looking very shy at his desk. The teacher asked him if he could play something for the class, and he said yes. So Valbona sent him home to pick up his violin in order to play for the class. In the meantime, she continued with the lesson and asked the students:

“How is music connected with other sports or arts? For example: maybe a musician saw the UEFA cup and got inspired to write a song.” The students answered the questions by giving some examples. One student said: “A picture of a sad mother inspires us to listen to sad music.” One girl said: “People play music in the streets to earn money.” Another student said that music is connected to sculpture, and the teacher seemed surprised. She asked: “And how is this possible? What do you mean by this?” and the student answered: “Because, teacher, we can dedicate a song to a beautiful sculpture.”

After these examples, Valbona started to draw a diagram on the blackboard:



The drawing showed the connection that music had with the other facets of life like sports, arts, and industry. Most of the things that the teacher wrote were suggested by the students themselves. Valbona then asked a girl to collect all the papers with the information, because she needed them to evaluate the students and also, she said, because she found them very interesting. Later on, she told a student to take them home and scan them for her; “It is much better to have them on my computer,” she explained.

While the girl was collecting the homework, Valbona selected a printed painting of Mozart from one of the students. She took the painting of Mozart and showed it to her students,

asking: “What does this photo express? What do his eyes express?” The students started to talk as soon they had an idea: “He looks thoughtful, a person who thinks a lot”; “He looks really smart.” Another student pointed out that he had a light smile. One said, “He looks happy that the other people appreciate him, value him.” The teacher asked: “Does he look arrogant in this picture?!” “Nooooo!!” all the students yelled out. Valbona asked: “Can this picture of Mozart be composed as a song?” “Yes, with melancholy slow music,” the students answered.

At that moment the young student with the violin entered the classroom and the teacher immediately apologized to him for making him go all the way to his house and getting him tired. She asked him to wait a few minutes till the end of the class and then to play some music to entertain them.

Valbona continued with the class asking her students: “What impact does music have in your life?” “In what way? What do you mean by this,” a girl asked. Without waiting for the teacher to answer, another student said that she listened to music when she was sad, because the music made her feel good and relieved. The student sitting next to her said that sometimes we also like to listen to happy and dancing music.

Ema, a shy girl standing at the first row of chairs, stood up and confessed that one day after school, she was very sad because she took a bad grade, so she was listening to relaxing music all day long. Another girl said that music helped her remember good memories, and the past. “We identify ourselves within the music,” she said.

Then with a playful smile on her face, Valbona asked the boy with the violin to play a famous melody from Mozart. He started to play, and in the beginning, he was a bit nervous and kept looking back at the teacher as a form of approval. But he played it well. After that, she told him to play whatever he wanted. “Maybe something faster would be nice”- she said. He did so,

and the class started clapping. Sihana noted that the violinist “was probably a Roma guy” because, according to her, he was playing the “tallava” – the Roma’s “happy songs.” The students asked him to play again, and he did, but later he had to stop because the bell rang. The teacher complimented him and told him that, for today, he deserved the top grade of 10. Valbona then gave the homework. She said, “You are going to have an interesting homework assignment to do; you will have to find songs that you like, and to bring them here next time. It would be ideal if you also find the lyrics so we can try to sing them,” she said as the students left the classroom.

Again, during this observation, we saw the Roma student singled out in a special way. Although the teacher apologized when she realized he had to travel all the way home and back to get his violin, it nonetheless surprised us to see a student dismissed for most of the lesson. The boy received the highest grade of 10 that day not for his academic performance but for his willingness and ability to entertain the class with music. Although everyone enjoyed the musical interlude, it nonetheless seemed to reinforce the differences among the students – the majority received the academic lesson, the Roma student did not. While his musical ability was something to be admired, the showcasing of his cultural and ethnic qualities for the sake of entertaining the class seemed again a kind of differential treatment that could be interpreted, particularly if it occurred frequently, as a form of discrimination and division. His performance in the class could also possibly serve to reinforce a popular stereotype of the Roma as “street musicians.” Thus, while they verbally embraced new educational models based on concepts of diversity, participation, inclusion, and equality, both Rozafa and Valbona enacted these ideals in questionable ways. I return to this discussion following the final vignette.

Community Grade School

Albana was an elementary and middle school teacher of Albanian literature and Social education. Like Eda and Rozafa, she had participated in the Foundation's project on conflict resolution that trained her to be a mediator and to train other teachers and students as mediators. When I met her in the spring of 2009, she had been a teacher for 8 years in the small town of Lezhe, about an hour north of the capital city.

As a member of a new generation of teachers who began teaching early in the new millennium, Albana's recollection of past practices weighed heavily on her. She held a very nurturing and open style of practice and purposefully aimed to avoid reproducing the intimidating methodology of many teachers during the dictatorship. With the new challenges of internal migration in Albania, Albana expressed a sensitivity and awareness of diverse student needs and identities in her classes. Rather than covering these differences with a blanket of rhetorical equality and non-discrimination, Albana made clear efforts to address student needs and conflicts. Viewing her students as an extension of her family, Albana aimed to create a safe and inclusive climate of openness and belonging in her classroom and the wider school community.

Unlike Rozafa, Albana did not seem fearful or guarded. Sitting at local café during one of our lengthy interviews, I asked her about her relations with the school director and others in the school. Albana took a long drag from her cigarette, laughed, and proclaimed, "I am not scared at all!" She then explained:

If we create an idea of the teacher's job, after she closes the door of the classroom, we have the impression that the teacher has total control of the class, but it is never like that. Usually I keep the class door open, not for any special reason, but that is the impression that the other teachers and the director have of me. They are always saying: 'Albana, you

are open. You keep the door open so that whoever wants to come and listen to your lecture, you are not afraid.' I personally feel very free and have a lot of freedom in organizing my classes. I have always been open, and also I always have invited teachers or directors and even DAR [the municipal education directorate] to be part of my classes, because I want them to see what I do. I have my own methods as you have yours, but the important thing is that we reach good results.

Underlying this sense of ease among students and her goal of catalyzing student engagement, Albana believed it was her role to help shape a new generation of learners through new strategies and approaches to teaching. She was reflective and careful to avoid the pedagogy of her own teachers that put students on the spot, shaming those who failed to provide the correct answer.

As demonstrated throughout her narrative, the primacy of social relationships and the inter-connections between her school relations and her classroom practices were important themes for Albana. The school was like a family; her role as a caregiver was integral to her role as an educator. She described her role as follows:

First of all I like to be the mother, then I like to be their teacher. I like to be their friend, and why not also to try to be their age? Because only like this will I understand them better, and only like this will I succeed in my work. Only like this will I make them feel free and comfortable with me, and only like this will we collaborate with each other. I could not imagine an hour of class without the collaboration of the students. If I don't reach this kind of collaboration, I have failed. My goal is not to explain or tell the new lesson, but to be the guide. I want to be just as the music conductor, and so my students are like the orchestra.

How do I do this? Usually, at the middle of the class hour, I open up new discussions, for example common topics about society that may not have a direct influence on the students right away, but at least it makes them speak openly. I insist very much on teaching my students how to express themselves.

Later in our conversation, I asked Albana about the significance of this kind of teaching in the context of all the social and political changes occurring in Albanian society. I asked, how did she see her role in relation to democracy and citizenship? She explained that she knows she has an important role, "because the teacher can educate the new generation and the future will

depend on what education we gave to these students.” Like Eda, she felt teachers should be a role model, for if they show them a way that is “good and healthy,” then “our future will be good and healthy” as well. In this way, she described the role of teachers as “final and decisive to the future.” She continued:

The teacher's role starts from kindergarten, goes on primary school, high school and so on. My students now are at that point or at that age of creating their character and our role now is decisive not only by speaking but also by action. Because saying something is one thing, and doing it is another thing. The students are observing how the teachers are acting and talking. If they see that there is a difference between those things, he might say: ‘teacher, you speak differently and act differently’. So I have to be very careful in front of my students, I should reflect good manner, following the rules, etc.

Like Eda, Albana also adopted a compassionate view of the students and recognized that they were living in a difficult time that was both stressful and confusing for them. This pressure increased the teacher’s responsibility to guide and educate students effectively. She explained:

We should take into consideration that the students now are growing up in a difficult environment, they are not very calm - they are living in stress. Yesterday somebody at the class opened a discussion about the pig disease [swine flu] and they told me: ‘Teacher, one third of the world population will disappear.’ And they had calculated it and got to the conclusion that 2.2 billion humans would disappear. My point here is that they are living with fear and stress, and the teachers should be very careful in giving them the right information because if not, the situation will get more stressful.

In general, contributing to the positive development of students’ character was another important theme for Albana. She emphasized how the students represented a new generation of future leaders, and she wanted to contribute to positive changes in the society by helping students cope with the many challenges they faced. Like Eda, in contrast to international models which emphasized a one way flow of knowledge transfer from teachers to learners, Albana also acknowledged that teaching and learning was a reciprocal process and thus, she too could learn from them:

Since this generation soon will take the control of our future and this country, most of all I wish and want for them to be fully developed in terms of good manners and citizenship and education. This is because they have new and more progressive ideas compared to us. Albania has been closed and now it is open to the world; we are getting more experience and influence from other countries. This becomes very clear when we see or meet our students that have studied abroad, and they come back with new ideas/mentality. They should be an example for us.

It is very important for these students and this generation to learn what's best for them and for the nation, because only like this can we fight the bad phenomena that our society is facing, like corruption. If we would have a non-corrupt government, then everybody will feel good, because they will win by knowledge, values and not by corruption, money or friends. We can't go further with these kind of methods, we will have to destroy them first, because when somebody applies for a job, the one that deserves it should win (like in the private companies), not like in the state's institutions where the one who gets the job is the one that has more friends or money. If we could raise these kids, this generation, with the idea and desire to fight these phenomena like corruption or old mentality, and also to be fair, then the society will go one step further.

Whatever background their families have, the children spend a lot time in school and so they get influenced from it. I try very hard to teach them not only the lesson but also to educate them to be good citizens. I teach them the way they should act in public, the way they should speak, the way they should communicate, and I try to teach them also the way they should face problems. I have told them that life is not easy, there will come the time when you will face many problems, but they should never give up, they should try to open another door of opportunity.

Related to her sense of her role as a mother and role model for students, and her concern for their character development, Albana also saw her role as a formative one in which she aimed for students to gain skills to manage conflict, improve communication, and actively participate in the life of the school, community, and society at large. In the wake of a classroom conflict that we observed, she spoke about helping students grapple with new aspects of diversity and stress that often gave rise to conflicts within the school and community. In this way, the local community context was an ever-present backdrop to classroom dynamics. Throughout our lengthy interview, which we conducted after the classroom observation described below, she stressed the overlapping themes of community, connection, inclusion, rights, and responsibility:

We have to keep in mind that Lezha has a heterogeneous population. By this we understand that we have a lot of people coming from other regions, villages, and that means we have a diversity of cultures and also intellectual diversity. This most of the time has been source of conflicts. I have talked a lot not only at the class or at the school, but I have also written an article about how many conflicts we face here in this place.

Since I am working for a long time with students, I know that they get involved in several conflicts very easily, just for small unimportant things like: one student teases the other because he uses a dialect. At this point, this student is feeling discriminated, and they tease him and call him “villager.” So my job is to talk and teach the students about conflicts. I have discussed a lot with my students about the way that we should communicate with each other. We have a lot of problems with communication, and this is a source of conflict too, because we all are different and we all have our opinions. My goal has always been to orient my students toward good communication.

As for the rights, I have made that clear to my students that your rights stop there where the other person’s rights start. So everybody has the right to live, to go to school, to get a degree, and be whomever he wants. So school is not a privilege just for me because I’m from Lezha, but also for the other kids that come from villages or other cities.

As for my students, I always try to make them feel open and to ask for their rights, because if they have values, let them knock on these doors and I want from them to know how to protect themselves. I don’t want them to feel crushed/ pressured from me and they often say to me: “Teacher I don’t agree with this thing, with your thoughts”. In this way I have made my students to feel sure of what they think and not afraid to show it. This will help them also in the future when they will fight and protect their ideas. I don’t want them to be scared of expressing their opinion because the teacher might put a low grade or the boss will get angry. The teacher, the boss, etc. should get used to different opinions.

Teaching students to communicate their ideas while tolerating opposing or different ideas was a final theme that Albana stressed. She felt that in general, Albanians had difficulty communicating with each other and agreeing to disagree without major conflict. She put it this way:

We Albanians are kind of like this, we want to impose to the others our opinions and these situations have created some conflicts within the class. My goal is not to eliminate the conflicts, because this can never be done -- they are going to be there as long as humans are alive. But my real goal is to teach my students how to manage these conflicts.

Thus, stepping back, Albana reflected, “We teachers have an extraordinary role, most of all with our behavior and also by teaching students what they should do. We are the ones that contribute the most to their character.” In the section below, we saw Albana’s approach to managing conflict first hand.⁴⁰

Community school visit – second class 6th grade. As Albana, my assistant Sihana, and I arrived at the door of her 6th grade Social Education class, we were surprised by a young student running out of the door crying. The student ran past Albana, who could not stop her, but she was soon stopped by the guard of the school and subsequently returned to the classroom. She was a very shy girl. Albana immediately asked all the students why their friend was so upset. All the students started to speak loudly at the same time and there was a bit of chaos. Albana tried to calm them down and asked for them to speak one at a time, and they did.

After they explained, we understood that the girl, who was a relative newcomer to the community, was upset because another student had teased her for her (different) dialect. She had pronounced the word “e veshtire” (meaning difficult) as “e shtire” (meaning fake), and a local student made fun of her. Albana recognized the conflict and played the role of the mediator, trying to help the students resolve the issue. She asked the students to put themselves in the position of that girl: “How would you feel if you were discriminated against for speaking differently?” she asked. The class remained silent.

Then Albana reminded her students about a poem they had learned about tolerance and discrimination. She explained how bad it is to discriminate against others because of their

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thoughts, religion, language, color, etc. because after all, we are all human. She said: “We shall not discriminate against people for their color, because it is not our virtue to be white, it is in our DNA; what we become in our life is our virtue.” “When we are born, we are pink; when we are sick, we look green; and when people die, they look purple. We are all different colors and not just white so we should not discriminate against people who look different from us.” Utilizing this approach, which she remembered from a training manual on diversity and equality⁴¹, she tried to teach them how to listen, how to be open-minded, and how not to discriminate, but to respect each other. “We should be tolerant,” she said, “and find a win-win solution.”

Meanwhile, the girl at the center of this conflict stayed behind her desk with her head down. She looked angry and embarrassed. Her face was red, especially her eyes, because she had been crying. She was not talking at all, but she sat quietly listening to Albana.

Albana discussed the situation without pointing at the individual students- saying you are right or you are wrong. Being an impartial mediator, she wanted to help find a solution, so that all the students could understand and not repeat the same mistake again. She then explained to the students that they would face conflict in the future, in different ways, but what is important is to know how to solve these issues with tolerance and understanding.

By the end of this impromptu lesson, the students seemed to feel better and the boy who teased the girl was apologetic. The girl stopped crying, and the other students did not say a word of disagreement. Then Albana moved forward with the textbook lesson that was planned for the day on the topic of “the market.”

⁴¹ I later found this exact poem called “Miku im” or “My Friend” in an extra-curricular handbook titled, “Jetojme Se Bashku” or “We/Let’s Live Together” co-published by UNICEF, the Roma Education Fund, and the National Pedagogical Institute in 2007. Andi was one of the authors listed.

Albana's nurturing feelings about her students were very evident in this example of conflict mediation. Interestingly, she drew on her training materials to bring the students together and reinforce her value for tolerance and diversity. She did this without showcasing any one person or making either party to the conflict feel diminished. This observation was consistent with our other classroom visits in which Albana made notable efforts to include students in the discussion and dialogue without putting them on the spot. What is interesting in this example is that Albana was able to adapt extra-curricular materials to a real live case. Rather than simply lecturing from the text during a regular class period, Albana applied the lesson she had encountered in an outside training handbook. However, as she returned to the curricular content for that day (the lesson on the market), we did not witness any extension of learning from the diversity lesson to the next topic. In other words, after Albana enacted the "live" curriculum of managing a real conflict, she made a noticeable shift back to the standard delivery of the material from the text without any question or interrogation of that material. As I discuss below, in this way, she was both an agent of change and continuity. In other words, while her role as a mediator was in many ways innovative, she did not use the standard text-based curriculum to similarly interrogate or question sources of conflict – such as the increasing economic inequalities or injustices that resulted from the market-based economy in Albania.

Analysis and Discussion

Interestingly, despite being of different generations, Eda, Rozafa, and Albana all verbally embraced the curriculum changes being introduced along with their new role as mediators, role models, and curriculum experts within their schools and classrooms. All the teachers shared a

desire for their students to become functionally literate citizens who contributed positively to a democratic society. As role models for their students and peers, they all expressed a strong sense of confidence in their pedagogy and a willingness to be observed by others in the process of demonstrating new practices. In this way, they can each be understood as informal leaders in their schools. Yet, as suggested in the vignettes, upon closer investigation, this leadership role ultimately enabled the teachers to both *propel* and *impede* change. While attempting to introduce new paradigms and practices in their teaching, they all in some way preserved some aspects of their more traditional role in the classroom. The table below helps illuminate this dimension of their work.

Table 5.1. Teachers’ Work: Enacting and Resisting Change with Unintended

Consequences

| Teacher’s action | Enacting change – Actions along the prescribed lines of the reform | Resisting change – Actions at counter purposes with the prescribed reform | Immediate Results – Intended (I) and Unintended (U) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Eda’s introduction of new curriculum on life skills / traffic safety | She attempted to integrate role play, group work, real life examples, and participant observation into this lesson | The lesson remained teacher-centered with the teacher and text as the central sources of knowledge; teacher resorted to an authoritarian role vis-à-vis disciplinary measures when students got “out of control” | I: Delivery of pre-set curriculum (including new curriculum area of “life skills”); Introduction of more “participatory” “student-centered” approach U: Loss of students’ attention; students’ alienation from the lesson; loss of teachers’ credibility, authority; rupture in teacher-student rapport |
| Sonila’s use of small groups in her democratic politics lesson | She divided the classroom into three groups during an interactive discussion of democracy | Students continued to work individually and report their responses directly one to one with the teacher; thus, there was actually no “group” interaction among students | I: Nominal use of “group work”; attempted a pedagogical break from routine text and teacher centered lessons U: Collaborative learning undermined; classroom disparities maintained (best performing students rewarded and uninterested students remained unengaged and/or silent) |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Rozafa's adaptation of "humanitarian action" lesson on school de-segregation | She juxtaposed an imported American-NGO lesson with class discussion and posed questions intended to internationalize by linking US and Albanian school contexts | Her emphasis on students' "equality" allowed her to overlook or ignore cultural, social, economic, and ability differences among students | I: Captured the majority of students' attention through reading the story; engaged student curiosity; attempted to ground a foreign lesson on human rights and equality in local realities U: Rendered diverse student identities and educational needs invisible through a discourse of "equality" thus contributing to the reproduction of educational inequalities |
| Teacher's action | Enacting change – Actions along the prescribed lines of the reform | Resisting change – Actions at counter purposes with the prescribed reform | Immediate Results – Intended (I) and Unintended (U) |
| Valbona's use of student's violin performance | She invited a student to bring his own musical talents into the class – thus making the curriculum more personally relevant and immediate to the students | One of few Roma students in the class missed half of the lesson by leaving the class; his musical performance could be seen to re-inscribe his ethnic and cultural difference through the "performance" of a stereotypical Roma identity (i.e. street musician) | I: Practiced a student-centered pedagogy that allowed students' voices and talents to reinforce curriculum goals U: Reinforced division and stereotypes among students, undermining students' "equality"; by default, excluded a minority student from participation for over half of the lesson |
| Albana's "open-door" teaching approach | Unlike many other teachers in the school, she kept her classroom door physically open and allowed students to address her in informal ways | The content of borrowed educational materials was delivered at face value – students presented as fact materials downloaded directly from the internet; there was no connection made between the formal/planned curriculum (discussion of market) and the de facto/lived curriculum (experience of discrimination based on cultural and economic class differences) | I: Introduced new teaching methodologies and transformed the teacher-student relationship, at times offering a more student-centered approach U: Despite interactive nature of the lessons, students continued to play a largely passive role without critical examination or discussion of downloaded and borrowed materials, textbook content, or the teacher's impromptu lesson on tolerance. |
| Albana's adaptation of technology use in the classroom (based on another day of observation) | She allowed students to run the power-point presentations on new global themes of AIDS and environment | | |

The analysis presented here of Albanian teachers exhibiting hybridity as they introduced new techniques and content into their classes echoes the findings of other researchers concerned with teachers' practice in post-authoritarian, post-socialist, and reform oriented contexts. For example, Sarfaroz Niyozov, a comparative education researcher investigating educational change

in the post-Soviet Republic of Tajikistan (2001), provides a useful analysis of the instances of non-uniform and experimental pedagogical practice among teachers. Niyozov found that “the same teachers moved between teacher-centered, authoritarian, coercive, and transmissive pedagogic models, on the one hand, and student-centered, democratic, and collaborative styles, on the other. This was often within the same classrooms and subjects” (2008, 137).

Furthermore, hybrid enactment of new teaching approaches may take on different forms depending on the teacher’s situation. Here, the differences between these teachers help illuminate the range of factors that affected their practice. For example, the most salient difference between Rozafa and Albana was their varying sense of freedom and their feelings of security/insecurity regarding their positions. While both teachers described feeling somewhat free **within** their classrooms, it was clear from classroom observation and discussion that they were affected differently by a number of inter-related factors including their relationship with the school leadership, the availability and reliability of resources and services, and their perceptions regarding what was acceptable or desirable based on school and societal norms.

Another important difference that shaped their pedagogical choices was the quality of student-teacher relationships and the corresponding variation in their roles as an authority. While Albana and Sonila maintained their authority and sought respect by staying close to students, encouraging their active engagement and participation in class, Rozafa and Eda maintained more of a relational distance from students. This was evident in the way Rozafa addressed her students formally during the lesson, and then came to speak informally about the students with me during the class. Discussing students’ ethnicity and psychological (dis)abilities with me during the class period, with the students in the room, signaled a kind of authority move that minimized the presence and voice of the students in those moments. Furthermore, while both Rozafa and

Albana commanded respect, and students in each class rose to address the teacher, the level of responsiveness of the teachers varied. In these differences, we can link the teachers' perception about their role (as a nurturing mother, a role model, or a friend) to the more formal and traditional roles that they held (such as ensuring mastery of the lesson's content and evaluating student performance).

Finally, the school and classroom contexts as well as the range and quality of prior experience of these teachers varied significantly. As apparent in the vignettes, the teachers brought their prior experiences into the classroom. For Albana, this centered on improving communication in the classroom and school. She aimed to depart from the practices of her own teachers who discouraged students from having confidence in their own voice by "discriminating" against them. She sought to encourage students' confidence in a number of ways. Her pedagogical approach resulted in both an open door classroom and other attempts within the school to create openness – such as through her role as a conflict mediator. In Rozafa's case, the institutional context –both physically and discursively– weighed heavily on her practice. As a "periphery school" that was labeled by many as a school in trouble, Equality Middle School broadcast its commitment to "equality". Yet in everyday practices, there were times when students' rhetorical equality was undermined in the face of the very real and largely overlooked inequalities among them. Eda's position in an established secondary school in the city center left her feeling unsupported by busy parents and frustrated by students' general scholarly disengagement. With its central location, the school also served as a convenient stop for politicians and outside observers. It is likely that this high visibility increased the pressure placed on teachers to "look good" for visitors.

These similarities and differences provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the teachers' world. The table below situates these findings within a wider lens that incorporates the intersecting layers of influence that operated for these teachers. While it is difficult to translate the fluidity of a teacher's perceptions into the modality of a table, this graphic nonetheless represents an attempt to map out one view of the constellation of concerns that affected teachers' decision-making and practice as localizers of global educational models in Albania during the concurrent processes of democratization and education reform.

In my analysis of these multi-dimensional factors, I take to heart the rich insights of Deborah Britzman based on her ethnographic study of beginning teachers. She wrote:

Learning to teach is a social process of negotiation rather than an individual problem of behavior. This dynamic is essential to any humanizing explanation of the work of teachers. Teaching concerns coming to terms with one's intentions and values, as well as one's views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiation, and dependency and struggle. (Britzman 2003, 31)

With this complexity in mind, the table below is my "humanizing" attempt to map out some of the intersecting dimensions that affected the choices, beliefs, and practices of the teachers in this study.

Table 5.2. Complexity Within the Teacher's World

| Teachers’ Concerns in Relation to: Area of Teacher’s World: | Self | Students | School/ System | Community/ Municipality | Society/ Nation/ World |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| Role/ Identity /Status (Characterized by self-identified, discursive, institutional, professional roles; formal and informal status) | Sense of one’s role as a professional; guarding one’s reputation; concern for job security and financial wellbeing. | Being perceived as an expert; attention to classroom management and disciplinary role; desire to be a role model and demonstrate correct behavior; mentoring students; and tutoring students who need additional instruction. | Acting as a departmental leader, mediator, teacher trainer, curriculum model; gaining a reputation within the school and wider system as an excellent teacher; achieving certification; being a role model to other teachers. | Gaining respect within municipality through civic participation, leadership of activities, providing services such as mediation and achieving certification; becoming an advocate for youth and providing a safe community space for youth at risk; participating in municipal educational and community based activities. | Becoming a representative global citizen and member of knowledge society; forming the next generation of leaders; attaining social mobility within and beyond local community; serving as a local representative for international organizations. |
| Forms of Knowledge (Characterized by concrete, abstract, analytic, experiential, conceptual, and applied forms) | Subject knowledge and formal educational training; experiential knowledge and “metis”; communication knowledge; knowledge of one’s expected position in school life. | Knowledge about student learning and teaching methods; pedagogical knowledge; child development knowledge; age-appropriate subject knowledge. | Knowledge of school structure, hierarchy, and schedule / timetable; understanding of professional position in school; knowledge of training methods and subjects when serving as peer mediator and trainer; knowledge of rules and regulations; tacit knowledge of school culture and politics, norms, and procedures. | Awareness of community issues such as internal migration issues, rural/urban flight; economic conditions; understanding of local norms, community culture; knowledge of municipal education structure, procedures, expectations. | Knowledge of subject matter for teaching and learning about the nation/world; experiential knowledge based on international travel, reading, research, inter-cultural interaction; technological knowledge through email and online resources; experiential knowledge gained from national, international, and transnational professional activities such as training, conferences, meetings, workshops, and exchange, etc. |

| Teachers' Concerns in Relation to: Area of Teacher's World: | Self | Students | School/ System | Community/ Municipality | Society/ Nation/ World |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| Relationships (Characterized by a sense of inclusion, care, participation, and leadership) | Nurturing one's personal, professional, and private family life; attending to one's immediate and extended families; maintaining personal contacts and involvement in various groups and networks as a member. | Caring for students' wellbeing, character, and future opportunities; cultivating a sense of friendship, respectful authority, mentoring, and mutual respect with students; advising students and mediating conflicts through formal and informal processes; attending to students' personal and academic needs. | Maintaining a positive relationship with the school Director, Vice-director, Department head, and other leaders; Developing a good working relationship with the Municipal educational Directorate and key actors at the municipal level; Contributing to positive working relationships with peers, fellow teachers, and evaluators. | Responsive to relations with community leaders, local parents, civic, social and non-governmental groups and organizations; participation in (or aversion of) local politics, political parties, and media outlets; membership and participation in municipal level organizations. | Membership and participation in national, regional, international peer groups or international non-governmental advocacy networks; participation in teachers' unions and professional associations; engagement in social networks and relations with foreign diaspora, including national, international, and transnational professional networks. |
| Practices/ Enactment (Characterized by professional, creative, productive, and resistant forms) | Self-evaluation and esteem; personal involvement in educational projects; training and professional development for career advancement; lifelong learning. | Student evaluation, testing, and assessment; fostering student performance on tests; involving students in curriculum goals for literature, language, sciences, social studies, math; advising student government and clubs; developing curriculum, particularly for free hour lessons; maintaining the classroom physical and learning space. | Preparing for school-wide and system-wide examinations; navigating effectively through infrastructure issues related to classroom, school, community; training and mentoring peers; adapting and implementing new regulations, reforms, textbooks and curricula; participating in extra-curricular school-related activities. | Educating school and community about local needs through activities and projects; navigating through uneven aspects of local infrastructure such as roads, school buildings in poor condition; creating and promoting community development opportunities; addressing social issues and mediating community conflicts and conflicts between school and community. | Teaching students and modeling positive behavior and values vis-a-vis democratic citizenship, conflict resolution, national and cultural identity; encountering and translating, adopting or contesting global norms, values, beliefs and practices; negotiating between local realities and new global influences; preparing students to participate in knowledge economy, employment, civic participation; participating in professional and/or social networks. |

To understand a teacher's world holistically, we must look at the various contexts and relationships that constitute her "situation". The situationally constrained choices that teachers must make, at different times throughout their day or through their careers, catalyze concerns over a range of competing demands and factors. Moreover, teachers locate themselves in relation to a wide range of other actors such as students, peers, student parents, school, municipal, and state authorities, and, more personally, in relation to their own family members, friends, colleagues, and social networks. These linkages all affect their decisions and practice at various moments. For instance, some of the considerations they might make include the following:

- What impact will their pedagogical responses to students in the classroom have on their relations with parents, community members, and school leadership?
- How will their participation in a local organization or NGO project inform or impede their obligations within the school?
- If they are selected to participate in an international project – such as a UNICEF project on children's rights – how will their involvement benefit them? Will it contribute to or improve classroom resources, content knowledge, or teaching practice? Will it enhance their professional reputation? Or will involvement in an international pilot project merely serve as an unrecognized constraint on their limited time?

By exploring the kinds of choices and selections that teachers make at various intersecting points on Table 5.2, we can begin to fathom the complexity of their everyday world.

Moreover, teachers' varying degrees of freedom and insecurity weigh heavily on the process of addressing these competing interests. For teachers who feel a great deal of freedom or autonomy in their classroom, the options may be wider and the choices made, more flexible. Yet for teachers who have internalized a sense of insecurity over their position, other factors –such as

their relationship with school authorities, interactions with community members, or their status and professional reputation– will weigh more heavily upon their decision-making. The tacit knowledge that factors into teachers’ choices is difficult to identify in the modality of a graphic table. However, I argue that in each of the interlocking cells in Table 5.2, teachers engage and utilize various forms of knowledge according to the specific needs, desires, and pressures that she or he experiences in that situation. Furthermore, through an analysis of this kind, the interplay of teachers’ various roles, identities, forms of knowledge, relationships, and various social and pedagogical practices can be acknowledged and analyzed.

Conclusion and Implications

Taken as a whole, the vignettes and research findings discussed here provide some insight into the complexity of the teachers’ world as well as the significant dual role teachers occupy as agents of change and continuity in classrooms during periods of reform. Considered in light of the wider goals of Albanian educational reform and democratization, this more complicated view of teachers’ hybrid practice forces us to re-examine and assess the intended outcomes of policies that construe teachers’ work in particularly narrow functionalistic ways. Further, this analysis enables us to better imagine the complexity of school life from the point of view of teachers and thus to contextualize the possible unintended consequences that may result from the hybrid enactment of familiar and novel teaching approaches.

As old and new collide in the space of a curriculum unit – the enactment of which is left to the teacher and students to negotiate – teachers are subject to a range of discourses regarding their role and identity. They are at once positioned as knowledge workers in the global

knowledge economy and local educators accountable to parents, school hierarchy, municipal authorities, and national standards. Thus, the situationally constrained choices they make incorporate their response to a range of pressures as they mediate local and global forces. These contradictions and flows collide within them and are negotiated through their hybrid practice. Taking this complexity into account, reformers must learn more about the skills that experienced professional teachers already have as well as the skills and related institutional and professional support that they need to successfully navigate these uneven and shifting terrains of local/global identity, knowledge, and practice.

Given the inherent uncertainty of school systems undergoing reform in a post-communist context, the pressures and challenges teachers face must not be underestimated. This chapter has shown that teachers respond to reforms as both agents of change and stakeholders of continuity. When introducing educational reforms, policy makers should recognize that teachers respond from a multiplicity of perspectives and that change is a gradual process. As Larry Cuban reminds us:

Teacher repertoires, both resilient and efficient, have been shaped by the crucible of experience and the culture of teaching. Policy makers need to understand that altering pedagogy requires a change in what teachers believe. Getting professionals to unlearn in order to learn, while certainly not impossible, is closer in magnitude of difficulty to performing a double bypass heart operation than to hammering a nail. (Cuban, 1986, p. 109)⁴²

Thus to avoid negative unintended consequences, reforms should take account of teachers' intuitive and experiential knowledge as well as larger social, political, and international policy goals. Rather than subverting teachers' knowledge with official discourses and abstract foreign

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constructions of expertise, policy makers can instead galvanize momentum for change by tapping into the *metis* of experienced teachers and allowing for teachers to take the lead in developing and gradually incorporating new elements into their classroom configurations of identity, authority, knowledge, power, and pedagogical practice.

As I argued at the outset of this chapter, teachers are pivotal intermediaries in the process of educational change; school classrooms are the direct interface between the larger structure of the national curriculum and the microcosm of teaching and learning. As the teachers in this study demonstrate, the construction of identity is constantly underway as a byproduct of curricular and pedagogical aims. In the classroom, teachers' reputations and status positions are defined and refined. Students' sense of themselves as learners, members of the school community, citizens, and future workers are also constructed and mediated through both direct and tacit interventions within the life of the classroom. These complex processes must not be ignored as reforms enter the school through the classroom door.

Ultimately, classrooms are comprised of a delicate balance of personalities, goals, orientations, epistemologies, and abilities. As noted educational researchers Lieberman and Miller argue:

Schools are like families where unspoken understandings dominate. There are characters, strong personalities, leaders, those to be tolerated. There are ways of being open or being closed. There are people who are listened to and people who are ignored. As in the family in all its complexity, there are those endless tensions that one learns to tolerate. (1984, 94)

Teachers must mediate these elements and negotiate these tensions on a daily basis, making moment-to-moment choices in their activities and interactions. For example, one quick glance from teacher to student can shift the classroom dynamic entirely. Such calculated gestures are strategically deployed throughout the 50-minute class period multiple times each day. Thus to

demand immediate and widespread change within such a delicate web of interaction is often counterproductive. Instead, what is needed is a deeper understanding of the factors and conditions that situate teachers as agents of change *and* stakeholder of continuity during periods of reform. For, as this chapter has shown, teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and pedagogical practices have a significant impact on *whether* and *how* global models for democratic citizenship education and paradigms of educational reform ultimately make their way into classrooms.

Chapter VI

Conclusion: Towards an Actor-Centered Understanding of Post-Communist Education Reform, Localization, and Democratization

This dissertation began with the following question: *How are key actors localizing global educational models in post-communist Albania?* I found that while national policy documents largely reflected a goal to reproduce international norms, particularly European and neo-liberal frameworks for educational reform and standardization, local actors nonetheless interpreted, adapted, and in some cases, subverted these models to better fit with existing educational structures and practices. The localization processes that I identified thus included appropriation, adaptation, improvisation, resistance, infusion, and strategic enactment by situated actors. Analyzing these various processes and the educational contexts that frame them helps us to understand the particularities and inconsistencies of world cultural models associated with globalization. Furthermore, by focusing on the roles, identities, forms of knowledge, and practices of key local and international actors, we can better understand why global models often fail to be fully implemented in local venues but are instead selectively, strategically, and creatively modified and transformed.

After introducing the case of Albania, highlighting relevant literature, introducing my theoretical framework, and outlining my methodology in Chapters I and II, I then analyzed the thematic cross-currents of international educational policy discourse and global educational models during the first two decades of Albanian democratization in Chapter III. I then presented a thematic analysis on the narratives of four international educational experts and argued that the composite of their expertise acts as both a means and an end of international educational transfer.

In Chapter IV, I focused on a small set of Albanian educational professionals who became “local experts” through their longstanding engagement with international models and foreign experts on the one hand and local stakeholders and conditions on the other. I show how, as part of their varied professional activities, they played an important role in constructing and circulating discourses of change in Albania. In particular, they participated in the construction of a new discourse for teacher professionalization that has important implications for teachers’ lives and work. I argued that the actors in Chapter IV thus served as key mediators between the global models discussed in Chapter III and the everyday knowledge and practice of teachers discussed in Chapter V. As such, their professional roles bridge processes of educational reform, localization, and democratization.

In Chapter V, my analysis turned from the national to the school level, providing rich ethnographic data emerging from numerous school visits and interviews with Albanian teachers. In this chapter, I juxtaposed the perspectives of three teachers (Eda, Rozafa, and Albana) with fieldnotes from observation of their classroom practice. As a result of the analysis of these various data, I argued that teachers are pivotal intermediaries in the process of education reform in Albania. My analysis showed how teachers’ hybrid forms of practice situated them as both agents of change and stakeholders of continuity in the post-communist social and political environment. Furthermore, their experiential knowledge or “metis” (Scott, 1999) was an important factor in determining teachers’ “situationally constrained choices” (Cuban 1985; 1986). Thus, by analyzing teachers’ beliefs alongside a discussion of their situated practice, I provided an intricate view into the complexity of school life during this period of Albanian democratization.

Re-thinking Localization

My dissertation started as a project to trace the processes and pathways of global educational models and to map the sites and actors who together conducted something called localization. Initially, I envisioned localization as a primarily *vertical (top down and bottom up)* process of selection, negotiation, adaptation, re-contextualization, and enactment. Models for participatory student-centered classrooms became concretized in the elite boardrooms of international organizations and in the sophisticated rationality of global educational policy experts. Thus the international level was conceptualized as the “top” of this complex system of educational transfer.

Then, according to my initial idea of localization, I traced how these models infiltrated the “metis” of the internationals, becoming part of their tacit knowledge base and their toolkit of best practices which then accompanied them to each new assignment, from country to country, agency to agency. This composite package of knowledge, know-how, and beliefs about what works was then unleashed in particular agencies, in projects, and in even more specific institutional and cultural contexts such as the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science. I imagined tracing the process through formal and informal mechanisms of transfer as these ideas were written into national policy documents, communicated to local educational leaders through training and experiential interaction, and implicitly legitimized through contractual Terms of Reference and other forms of binding agreements. So, the story of this dissertation was mostly about what happened next.

I wondered: Did the key players in Albanian education adopt in full the internationally sanctioned models of reform? Were these models and their corresponding projects and policies

implemented fully, in good faith? Were they communicated to professionals outside the policy community who were then charged with adopting new approaches for citizenship education in their everyday practice as curriculum experts and teachers? Did the global model reach the local school classroom? And in the process, how did particular Albanian educators interpret and respond to the new policies and teaching models that contained new configurations of knowledge and power? Along these lines, I wondered: Would teachers relinquish their familiar role as classroom executive? Would concepts of democracy be enacted in ways that allowed students to experience having a voice in their classrooms and schools? Would alternative and opposing viewpoints be explored, accepted and encouraged? Would all students participate in meaningful ways in the learning process? Would the rhetoric of change match the practice? And the list of such queries goes on.

However, through this intensive investigation of the “peopled worlds” of educational policy and practice in Albania, I have come away with a greater appreciation of the *horizontal* and *lateral aspects* of localization. Rather than exclusively top-down or bottom-up, I found that power relations were often expressed in the “interstitial” spaces, in locations and relationships that I have called throughout this dissertation “in-between.” And as a result, the localization that I “traced” occurred much more through subtle and malleable negotiations (talking sideways) than through direct and overt imposition (top down official transcripts) or targeted resistance (bottom up hidden transcripts). This story, in the end, is about those actors who, on a daily basis, grappled with the contradictions and competing pressures that resulted from the tensions and frictions between their own experiential knowledge and beliefs (*metis*) within the confines of institutional arrangements that demanded something different from them. For example, this story includes international experts who had strong value commitments to what education *should be* in today’s

globalized world, and yet, they struggled to make a difference when faced not only with local constraints, but ultimately with the limitations of their own role and position as outsiders. Each of them experienced being both “in authority” and “an authority” by virtue of their expert status, and yet, they all doubted their ability to fulfill their mandate.

Similarly, the in-between professionals, Spiro, Andi, and Juliana, struggled to transform local “mentalities” that they felt resisted important changes in the educational system, while they concurrently had to stand up to the “mentalities” of the international experts that fed them big ideas without the corresponding “partnership” that they sought to help them realize their goals for change. For them, cultural legacies and political pressures played a salient role in their navigation across diverse constituencies. Learning to read and speak to both the “official transcripts” and the “hidden transcripts” of various stakeholders were key strategies they employed. Thus, moving in between various constituencies and constantly mediating and translating across actors was a hallmark of their role and identities, knowledge, and practice.

From the Albanian teachers, we learned that *metis* is a double-sided coin; as locally situated experiential knowledge, it has the power to both propel and impede change. Their experiential and formal knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and classroom management techniques enabled them to weather the tumultuous uncertainty and complexity of school life. Teachers learned how to negotiate their practice within a tenuous context that often lacked transparency and access to key information, with uncertainty about the security of their job, and amid shifting discourses about what they *should be doing*. These shifting perceptions of the teachers’ role came from outside the school (i.e. communicated in policies and projects coming from Ministries, international organizations, local NGOs, community organizations, and/or local municipal educational directors) as well as from inside the school communicated by the school

directors, parents, and students themselves. Teachers constantly mediated these competing messages and corresponding tensions. They adopted complex strategies for adaptation – some of them served wider educational goals while others fulfilled more local and personal needs that teachers held dear (i.e. their job security, professional reputation, and their relationships with students and peers). They factored this multiplicity of concerns into making *situationally constrained choices* – that is, not “free choices” per se, but strategic choices based on partial information and limiting structures. Their experiential knowledge, metis, helped them calculate and prioritize these choices.

As Vavrus and Bartlett (2007) argue, the goal of a vertical case study is to “develop a thorough understanding of the particular at each level and to analyze how these understandings produce similar and different interpretations of the policy, program, or phenomenon under study” (p. 99). By comparing the views and experiences of Albanian teachers, local educational experts, and foreign experts, we can better understand the pathways that localization has taken in this case of Albanian post-communist educational reform. Along these lines, the findings generated in Chapters III-V provide useful insights to re-evaluate and modify Acharya’s (2004) localization framework for the purpose of further investigation of this phenomenon in other similar country contexts.

In his model (presented as Figure 1.1), transnational norms are transported through international norm “entrepreneurs” who introduce norms to local agents and entrepreneurs (Acharya, 2004, p. 254). These actors then facilitate the localization process which leads on the one hand to resistance if the foreign norm remains alien to the local culture or to the displacement of local norms at the other end of the spectrum. As I discussed in Chapter I, norms can take different forms and thus lead to different ends; for example, there are “regulative

norms” which structure and constrain behavior; “constitutive norms, which create new actors, interests, or categories of action;” and “prescriptive norms” which serve as rules to be followed (Finnemore and Barnett, 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 891; McNeely, 1995). In Acharya’s (2004) model, localization occurs when the foreign and local norms become “mutually constitutive” and thus co-exist and resonate well with each other. Alternatively, resistance represents the refusal of local actors to adopt the foreign norm, and norm displacement indicates that the local normative structure has been completely supplanted by the foreign norm or norms.

In the Albanian case, I argued that international and transnational norms and values were transferred to the Albanian system in at least two ways. First, they traveled through imported materials, policies, and projects for citizenship education and education for the global knowledge economy. Second, international norms were transferred through the applied expertise and authority of international experts involved in educational assistance and consultation with Albania. These international experts served as “norm entrepreneurs” as they interacted with local Albanians in a number of ways. For example, Andrew, the American UNICEF officer, managed an office that oversaw a number of pilot projects with Albanian municipalities. His perceptions and beliefs about what educational development *should* look like in Albania framed his interactions with local educational leaders and implementing partners. His interactions and official project plans reflected UNICEF and wider UN norms related to concepts of human rights, equality, autonomy, sustainability, local participation, and local ownership.

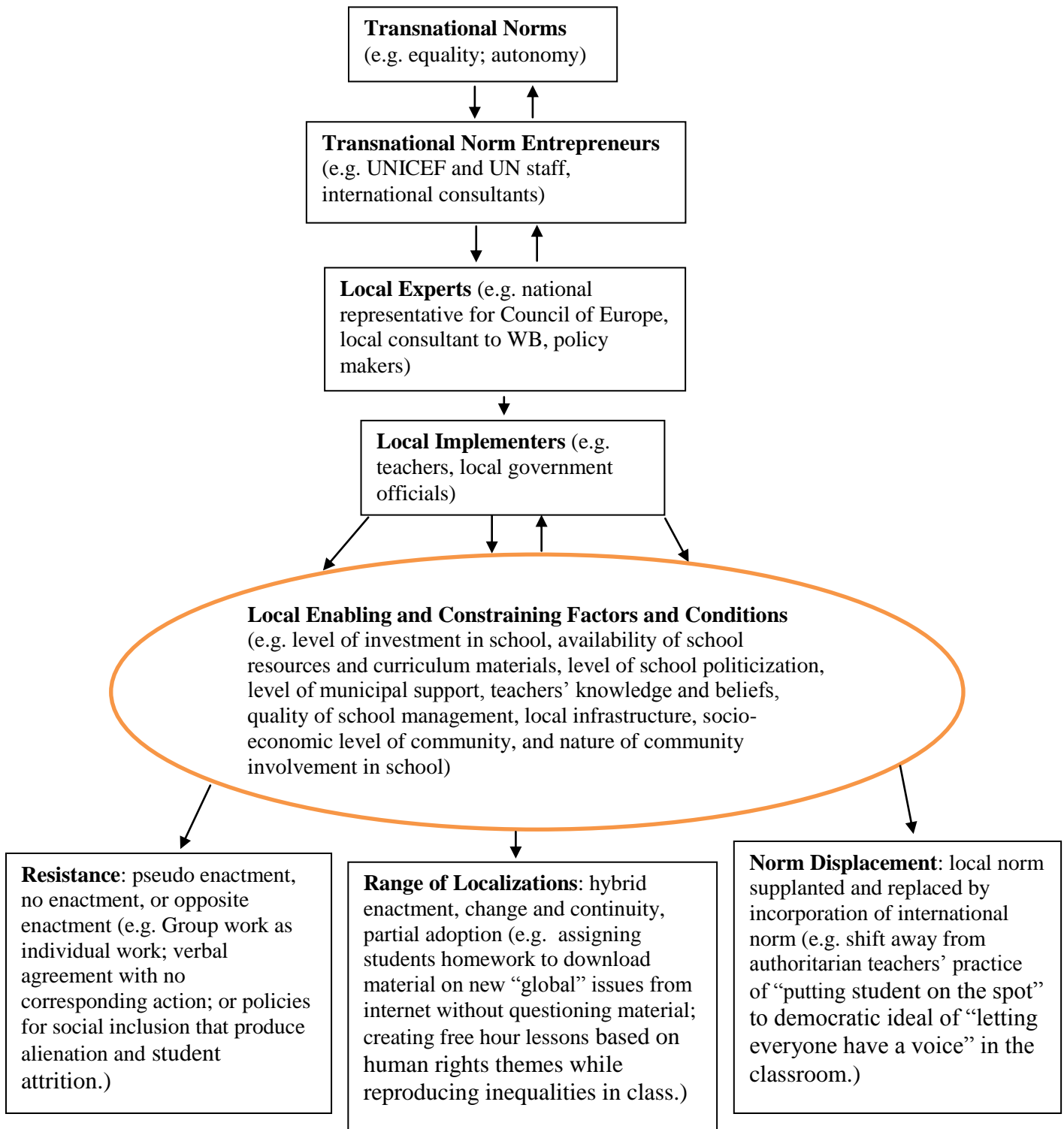
In another example, the local expert Andi worked with the international organization Council of Europe to learn more about their models of democratic citizenship education. He served as their local representative at various times and participated in regional networking

conferences with colleagues from other Southeast European countries. In these cases, there was both an international and a transnational transfer of normative ideas related to concepts and practices of citizenship education. Andi then returned to Albania and localized these norms by adapting the international models for Albania and applying his own expertise, normative beliefs, and values to the construction of civic and citizenship education materials for Albanian schools. These materials were then published and distributed to most schools throughout the country, including Eda's, Albana's, and Rozafa's schools. Andi also conducted numerous trainings on topics such as critical thinking, power dynamics, and communication skills for teachers and school Directors. The norms and values he promoted thus followed a number of specific pathways into schools, such as through curriculum materials, extra-curricular resources, training materials, and interactive training activities. Teachers then became the next participants in the localization process.

At the school level, the norms espoused by international experts such as Andrew, Dimitri, and Leslie faced significant resistance. For instance, I discussed how norms of independence and autonomy contradicted local norms of inter-dependence and community. In contrast to international models entreating teachers to develop "social maturity" by divorcing their decisions from outside pressures, the teachers in this study instead prioritized their social relationships with authority figures, parents, and students as factors that positively (through care and compassion) and negatively (through fear and insecurity) influenced their pedagogical choices. They saw their work as concretely embedded in the dynamics of their schools and local communities. They saw themselves as mothers, mentors, and role models influenced by the perceptions of others and a sense of reciprocal learning with students. While they tried to adopt international models of student-centered pedagogy and group work, and to treat all students equally, they nonetheless

continued to employ their familiar strategies of individual and text-based instruction as well as preferential treatment for the “good” students. In consideration of these findings, we must amend Acharya’s (2004, p. 254) localization model as follows:

Figure 6.1. Localization Re-Envisioned



Thus by delving into the question of how localization occurs from an actor-centered perspective, we can better identify the specific factors and conditions that mediate and regulate the flow of prescriptive norms from the international level of global projects to the local domains of schools, communities, and classrooms.

My research also demonstrates that in some instances, all of Acharya's outcomes may result from international educational transfer. One contributing factor may be the length of time involved. For example, in the short term, there may be a greater degree of surface adoption and resistance to the importation of international norms. However, as more time passes, and possibly as the degree of trust and familiarity between local and international actors increases, the outcome of transfer may move closer to that of a degree of localization exhibited through hybrid enactment of the international norms. Depending on how the outcomes of this hybridity affect the key actors, there may be increased localization over time (although localization may not follow a predictable linear pathway). Ultimately, if local implementers such as teachers and education officials are pleased with the outcomes, increased adoption is likely. They may also decide that in some cases the "old way of doing things" is no longer feasible or desirable and thus move toward complete norm displacement as they embrace a new set of normative principles and practices. I saw this example as teachers such as Albana rejected their own teachers' authoritarian model of pedagogy and embraced the new idea of an "open" classroom in which students held more power to "have a voice."

In general, when adapting Acharya's model to education systems, it is important to consider education's long time horizon. As noted by scholars such as Cuban, Fullan, Darling-Hammond and others, educational change takes time. The teachers in this study envisioned their role as contributing to *generational* change – that is, specifically, educating children in the

interest of social change twenty to thirty years later. Most teachers did not expect immediate results, and in fact, throughout my research in Albania, people spoke about having low expectations for change. There was a prevalent sense that cultural matters in particular (such as the level of openness and transparency in schools) were not going to change any time soon. Indeed, Andi, and others, felt pressure from international experts to realize immediate changes, while he personally felt that this was counter-productive. On the other hand, Spiro spoke about trying to move quickly with educational reform and leapfrog forward by borrowing international materials and relying on international partners to supplement local expertise. Thus, given the importance of time as a factor in educational reform and localization, it seems worthwhile to expand Acharya's model once again to include a time horizon that spans from immediate outcomes to mid-term, longer-range, and generational effects of norm localization in education.

Implications for the Field of Comparative and International Education

This project emerged out of a central debate in the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE) concerning two issues: the salience of World Culture Theory and the development of an alternative theory of International Educational Transfer. By 2012, this debate has evolved and changed shape. For example, it seems that proponents of World Culture Theory now acknowledge that international convergence at the level of national education policy does not necessarily also entail uniformity at the level of local implementation and school practice. Indeed at the 2011 Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) annual conference session debate (or "smackdown" as it was termed by one participant) on World Culture Theory,

one speaker noted, “How many more individual case studies do we need” to recognize that there is differentiation on the ground?

Like other researchers in our field who have employed Vavrus and Bartlett’s (2007) model of the vertical case study in order to investigate issues related to international educational policy transfer, my research shows two distinct trends. First, after the fall of the 4-decade long vehemently anti-Western communist dictatorship, the Albanian government has steadily and actively sought out Western aid and increasingly adopted Western (European and American) models of reform and democratization. If we were to look only at national indicators for policy adoption to test theories of global diffusion, the data from Albania would most likely support the World Culture thesis. However, what does this tell us about what is actually happening with educational reform in Albanian schools? If teachers are not teaching the global models, can we still say that a global process of convergence and isomorphism is actually occurring, or does it just look that way on paper?

Addressing this concern and related issues raised in edited volumes by Anderson-Levitt (2003) and Steiner-Khamsi (2004), my research shows that we must concede that the adoption of international standards and norms is mediated by a number of important factors. Teachers, for example, are not all doing the same things to educate for democratic citizenship and the global knowledge economy. Teachers’ beliefs and practices reflect a range of alternative priorities and values that deviate significantly and sometimes contradict the values and priorities prescribed by global educational models. Thus, we cannot confirm that we have a global convergence at sub-

national levels of policy and program implementation. Instead, we must explore the root causes and factors that shape this local differentiation⁴³.

To this end, my dissertation contributes a multifaceted analysis of a number of enabling and constraining factors and conditions that may explain why, despite a high degree of convergence and “harmonization” at the policy level, we nonetheless see various forms of adaptation and localization at the level of school practice. The findings I present in Chapters III-V thus contribute to a wider dialogue in the field of Comparative and International Education concerned with understanding the complexity of international educational transfer and theorizing its various pathways, mechanisms, and outcomes. It is my hope and intention that my vertical case study will contribute significantly to these future research agendas.

Implications for Albanian Educational Reform

In addition to contributing to the field of Comparative and International Education, my dissertation also provides a number of insights for professionals engaged in educational reform in Albania. In Chapter V, I make the following recommendations based on my findings on teachers’ hybrid practice:

1. Reformers must learn more about the skills that experienced teachers already have as well as the skills and *related institutional and professional support that they need*;
2. Policy makers can galvanize momentum for change by tapping into the *metis* of experienced teachers and allowing for them to *take the lead* in developing and gradually incorporating reforms into their classroom; and

⁴³ Schriewer (2000a; 2000b) has also contributed significantly to this debate and developed a rich research program to theorize differentiation within the world system.

3. We need to develop a deeper understanding of the *factors* and *conditions* that situate teachers as agents of change *and* stakeholder of continuity during periods of reform because teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and pedagogical practices have a significant impact on *whether* and *how* global models ultimately make their way into classrooms.

Expanding on the notion of providing support for Albanian teachers during the process of reform, the question of autonomy is crucial. On the one hand, providing teachers with a sense of security that their jobs will not be threatened by political partisanship would enhance their desire and ability to implement reforms. A meritocratic system of teacher certification and professionalization in which the hiring and firing of teachers were based on real indicators would most likely insulate schools from politicization and improve the profession. However, in the current scenario, teachers are concurrently being asked to change their teaching practice in the midst of adjustments to national modes of teacher assessment and evaluation.

Unfortunately, education policy borrowing in Albania has been conducted in a relatively uncritical manner and such local critiques as we have seen in New York City are rarely imported along with their corresponding prescriptive foreign policies and models. A leading American educational reform specialist, Linda Darling-Hammond (2012), argues that in New York, "value-added" methods for assessing teacher effectiveness are not only unreliable as measures of success, but ultimately such tests "reflect whom a teacher teaches, not how well they teach" (p. 2). As an alternative, she advocates ongoing forms of rigorous assessment by experts who are in a position to observe and understand teachers' classroom practice. "If we really want to improve teaching," Darling-Hammond contends, "we should look to ... models of effective evaluation, as

well as to high-performing countries that have professionalized teaching by ensuring excellent preparation, on-the-job collaboration, and ongoing professional learning” (2012, p. 3).

Similar critiques of standardized packages of education reforms are increasing in the U.S. context and elsewhere (see Ravitch, 2011 and Tough, 2011). While these critiques may or may not be directly relevant to the Albanian context, they should be acknowledged and perhaps debated by local education experts. Another article published in the September 2011 issue of the *Economist* concluded that improving the quality of teaching was the heart of effective educational reform around the world. Further investment in teachers’ professional development is thus an excellent strategy for Albanian educational reform. But as the article contends, creating stronger teachers takes a long time.

In Albania, teachers in the midst of a change process are slated to be evaluated by their students’ performance on high stakes tests. This scenario will likely increase teachers’ anxiety around using experimental and innovative pedagogies while also instilling a sense that they are being unfairly judged for the failures of poor and unmotivated students. Alternatively, teachers would be better supported through collaborative mentoring and further opportunities to share their professional teaching strategies with one another. They should be provided with institutional mechanisms for peer review and support, such as time during their day allotted for individual and collaborative professional development activities. Ironically, I believe that encouraging teachers’ inter-dependence and professional collaboration would foster greater autonomy and leadership.

For Darling-Hammond (2005), “neither a heavy-handed view of top-down reform nor a romantic vision of bottom-up change is plausible. Both local invention and supportive leadership are needed, along with new ‘horizontal’ efforts that support cross-school consultation and

learning” (pp. 366-367). Building on this perspective, and based on my findings in Albanian schools, I believe that a more effective and affirmative model for school reform in Albania would be one predicated on the notion of schools as communities. A model of school as community would be based on a “logic of care” that many teachers already embrace. It would tap into teachers’ sense of compassion for their students as well as their empathy for fellow teachers and their emphasis on school-community relations. Following such local logics would empower teachers to act on their intuitive and experiential knowledge, expertise, and existing cultural norms. Thus, I believe that eschewing (to some degree) the international model of schooling as a political incubator churning out citizens and workers for the 21st century and instead prioritizing a model of schools as communities would have a positive impact on educational change in Albania.

Yet another important implication suggested by my research is the need for teachers and schools to develop more effective strategies to negotiate issues of student diversity. The unintended consequences of “treating all students equally” should be further explored and addressed. With recent demographic changes and internal migration in Albania, many schools are becoming more diverse in terms of their ethnic and economic make-up. Roma and Egyptian minorities in some areas are staying in school longer, and students from a range of economic backgrounds are all attending schools together. With new educational reforms, greater attention may be directed towards the quality and content of teacher preparation programs, including teacher induction, in-service training, and certification. In all of these areas, teachers would benefit from increased attention to issues of diversity (including special needs students) and the development of skills for differentiated types of instruction.

Implications for International Education Policy Actors

Related to these implications for the Albanian context, my dissertation also offers important insights for international experts and professionals involved in various aspects of educational transfer and development. Unpacking the normative assumptions embedded in international expertise may cause discomfort for some, but it is essential if the international community is truly committed to the goal of aid effectiveness. Too often, international projects have left their proponents balking at the lack of effectiveness and sustainability achieved. As we heard from professionals such as Dimitri, Andrew, Teo, and Leslie, there was a pervasive sense that their good intentions and strong normative ideals of educational development would not and could not be realized in the Albanian context without the internationals “breathing into” these projects. While “local ownership” is the ultimate goal of the internationals, often their assumptions about what will facilitate a projects’ sustainability are flawed. Thus, creating mechanisms for international experts to reflect on and clarify their own normative assumptions would be a first step towards more effective international-local partnerships.

Furthermore, while including local stakeholders is one of the core mantras of international experts, local actors are rarely included in the process of project conceptualization and design. More often than not, global models reflect the norms and priorities of international organizations such as the OECD, WB, or UN agencies. In particular, they often embody shared global norms such as the ubiquitous “education for all”, or others such as “quality education”, “inclusive education”, “lifelong learning”, and “education for the 21st century knowledge economy.” For international experts, these packaged discourses on educational development embody the universalized norms that *should be* applied to all countries, regardless of their unique

and particular characteristics. But how often are local experts, and more explicitly, local implementers like teachers and community leaders, involved in the conceptualization of these value-laden ideas? The evidence presented in my dissertation suggests that localization will occur in a number of ways as these global ideas become translated, adapted, and selectively applied to specific local contexts. This localization process may lead to hybrid results and unintended consequences that can jeopardize, undermine, or otherwise deviate from the original aims of the project.

My recommendation, then, for international experts involved in the process of educational transfer is to recognize that some form of localization is going to occur and anticipate how to work constructively with local actors through all phases of a project's implementation. International experts should also develop insights into the composite nature of their own expertise and when it places them in positions *of authority* as opposed to serving as *an authority*. Similarly, they should become adept at galvanizing the situated experiential knowledge, or *metis*, of local actors who will be the main implementers of local educational reform policies and projects. Ultimately, local ownership should begin in those international boardrooms and think tanks where projects are conceptualized and designed, not in the local schools and communities where they are later implemented.

Study Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

All research projects have their limitations, and this one is no exception. Generalizability is the first limitation with a qualitative case study such as this one. While I attempted to gather data from a broad array of participants at various levels in the Albanian educational system, my

selection processes were not random and my sample could not be considered representative of the Albanian population or of all Albanian educators. Instead, this study offers rich insights from a range of perspectives that may contribute to a number of further investigations as well as cross-case comparisons.

Though I argue that the inductive nature of this study is a strength, it can also be seen as a second limitation. In a formal sense, I did not endeavor to test hypotheses or develop explanatory principals on the causes of localization. Nonetheless, through focused attention on the three thematic areas of actors' identity, knowledge, and practice, my analysis identified several factors and conditions that mediate and contribute to the localization process. I believe these constraining and enabling factors could be analyzed and explored by future researchers who wish to develop and test hypotheses on educational localization in urban, rural, and periphery schools.

I also found that despite my commitment to feminist theory, my dissertation as a whole did not adequately address gender as a factor of localization. Reflecting on all the changes that had occurred in Albania between 2002 when I first visited the country and 2009 when I conducted a large chunk of my dissertation research, I wrote the following in a research memo:

Do Albanians have more choices now than they did in 2002 when I first encountered this town? I would say definitively yes. But don't be deceived by exotic storefronts and the availability of imported items like soymilk and peanut butter. Choices here are still shaped by serious economic and cultural constraints. As an educational researcher, I am curious whether, for example, choices in curricular units, or choices in public and private schools are equivalent to those of a democratic system? It seems in some ways yes, but in other ways, no. What are the obstacles to fulfilling the seeming availability of options? Like Juliana's textbook story. There is still a dearth of information about what those choices represent – what are the comparative advantages or disadvantages of various options? And there is little to no preparation in the process of considering options and then coming to an informed decision. Teachers in particular often defer their given opportunity to choose over to an authority figure who can make the choice for them, like a principal or a school director (most often, incidentally, a female teacher deferring to a male authority figure). Are women's choices deferred more often than those of men? How is gender an intermediary factor in this study of educational change and democratization? These are some issues I will need to consider in the future.

Unfortunately, I did not adequately address these gender dimensions in my study. But gender was nonetheless an important aspect of my research. For instance, it was an unspoken factor in my interviews with the (all female) teachers⁴⁴. Sharing stories about our families and the domestic roles we played was a way of building trust with them. In another example, my research colleague at AFCR, who introduced me to many teachers and became a friend, also shared with me her challenges as a professional Albanian woman, wife, and mother. We talked about the changing roles of women and how despite so many social and political changes in Albania, significant cultural and structural constraints for women remained. And finally, my own Albanian family, a source of support throughout the research process, was also rife with gendered conflicts concerning the various roles of family women -- mother, sister, daughter, “nusja”/bride or wife, “kunata”/sister-in-law, and “vjerra”/mother-in-law. All of these gendered experiences became a part of the very fabric of my research. However, because my analysis did not adequately address the gendered facets of localization, I strongly believe further research in this direction is merited.

Another important avenue for further research would be talking to students, both in Albania and across other post-communist societies. Interestingly, Albanian students seemed to respond to the notion that they are “post-national citizens” (Soysal, 1994) in some ways more than national citizens. In the cafes in the capital, the youth congregate and hover around laptops, spending hours online chatting and updating Facebook pages. Even in the school computer labs, students told me – with a smile - that the main use of the computers was email and “Facebook”. Students dream of traveling abroad for school or work, and they long for EU citizenship because

⁴⁴ Incidentally, I did try to include male teachers in my study, but there were no male teachers focusing on aspects of citizenship education at the time and selected locations of my study.

it means they can travel without the brutal degradation and humiliation of the visa application process. They look up to American and Western European musicians and cultural heroes, leaders like Obama, sporting legends, and Western European fashion icons and celebrities.

While my research did not focus on youth, these observations were gathered in the course of my research in schools and my ethnographic observation in towns and cities. But interestingly, students did not seem to aspire to making their Albanian democracy more their own. While some students were politically, and fewer socially, active, their eyes seem to be focused beyond national boundaries. They wanted to belong to the world. They seemed to write off their own politicians, although all the major parties in the 2009 elections did involve youth campaigns and mobilizing the youth. Even the political party that evolved out of the former youth activist campaign called MJAFT! (ENOUGH) – G99 - did not receive one single seat in the parliament in 2009 elections. This seems telling that while youth were mobilized prior to the election, these activities did not translate into political gains.

In classrooms, I observed a form of democratic citizenship education that was centered on the accumulation of knowledge about the functions of government and the shape of a democratic state. These were points to be mastered by the students. But research must investigate the implications of this approach in the context of students' lived experience, i.e. amidst a domestic political system rife with corruption, clientalism, and constantly contested elections. How will these students perceive and enact their roles in the evolving Albanian democracy? In sum, the role of youth, women, and gender in Albanian educational reform, localization, and democratization are important areas for future research that would build on my dissertation.

Appendix

Appendix A: Expanded Table 3.1. International Organizations and Their Educational Assistance in Albania (1990-2005)

| Organization | Program/Project Focus | Category of Assistance |
|--|--|--|
| Albanian Center for Human Rights (local organization with international funding) | Partner with Institute for Pedagogical Studies to develop HRE program focused on curriculum development, teacher training at pre-service and in-service, and national education policy/strategy development. Integration of HRE themes into all aspects of education – particularly in civic education (1993-2001). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Curriculum / Textbook development, re-printing ◆ Teacher Training / Capacity Building ◆ Project piloting ◆ Programming for HRE (conference organized) |
| Catholic Relief Services (CRS) | School Connectivity Project linking the region; school reconstruction. | Technical capacity development |
| Council of Europe | Conducted assessment on education for democratic citizenship; provides materials on European educational standards and initiatives; curricular materials on human rights education, tolerance, and respect for diversity; promotes sites of citizenship and school twinning; focus on European dimension in education (after Albania became member in 1995) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provides standards for Democratic Citizenship Education/European dimension ◆ Stock-taking ◆ Resources provided |
| Helsinki Committee | Sponsorship for Human Rights Education – resulted in development of student activity book for grade 1-8 in HRE. Booklets focused on children’s rights in the Albanian context, rights and responsibilities, student participation, critical thinking, and non-discrimination. Booklets were distributed and piloted, and regional trainings held reaching teachers, students, and local education authorities. | Financial support Resource/curriculum development |
| International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC) | Education on migration and re-integration issues; youth training and workshops | NA |
| International Organization on Migration (IOM) | Developed material and trained teachers, in cooperation with Albanian Institute for Pedagogical Studies, on education issues pertaining to counter trafficking, human rights, HIV/AIDS, and gender. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Teacher Training ◆ Resource Development ◆ Technical Support; Process Facilitation for Education as a Component of National Strategy on Migration |
| Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) | Completed Thematic Review of national policies for education (2002); Programme on International Student Assessment (PISA) project for national standards; Priority issues include: stability, access, equity, quality, efficiency, and governance. | Stock-taking Analysis of education governance Policy Recommendations |
| Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) | ODIHR hosting conference on Human Rights Education; OSCE activities related to Human Rights Training and Education with focus on anti-trafficking, women’s rights, rule of law, youth entrepreneurship, and civil society development, and education for children with disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Coordination ◆ Capacity Building ◆ Supporting initiatives and building partnerships for human rights training and education |
| Kulturkontakt (Austria) | Vocational education programs | NA |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Save the Children | Children’s rights; early childhood education; children with disabilities, poor, and marginalized children; cluster school programme in 70 rural schools- Dibra, Korca. Focus on child participation in schools and democratic schooling; child-friendly learning environment. Also involving children and parents in the life of the school | Cluster school development Programming for children and teachers School and community activities |
| Soros Foundation/ Open Society/ AEDP (Albanian Education Development Project) | Teacher training; support for local NGO network in education reform; support for school reconstruction and community development; former projects in democratic citizenship education, human rights education, and law education in at least 13 districts; Cluster school projects; support for regional South East European educational network; Step by Step preschool project; conducted “Conflict Resolution and Mediation in Schools” project after 1997 crisis; Teacher education program “Kualida”; Education governance and decentralization assistance. General focus on quality education and open society – critical thinking, education for democratic citizenship, and capacity building throughout educational system. | Capacity building Curriculum development Resource publication Teacher training School building and reconstruction Education system reform |
| United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | Implementing technology in schools in Northern Albania; worked with “Safer Albania” on a disarmament education and peaceful culture project in four pilot schools in Tirana and Shkodra; education to link police and schools and build community security; issues included preventing crime, prostitution, human trafficking, blood feud, & use of drugs; e-schools project. | Infrastructure development Training/Capacity building Awareness raising Policy recommendations |
| UN Partnership (Hague Appeal for Peace/UN Department for Disarmament Project) | Developed curriculum, providing teacher training, and supporting community development projects on peace and disarmament education in Gramsh and Shkodra; Peace and disarmament education, “disarming minds”. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Curriculum development ◆ Capacity building/teacher training ◆ Investment in educational and community resources |
| United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) | Programs and curriculum development in human rights education; translation of UNESCO educational publications; worked with the Albanian Human Rights Center and the Center for the Rights of the Child; developed teacher manuals; worked with MOES to discuss HRE themes at government level; “Democracy in Action” school-based project. | Curriculum development Resource development Networking Teacher training (piloted) |
| United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) | Projects on Global Education in 14 primary schools (in 12 districts), expanding to reach 30 schools including grades 1-4; Education Policy Reform assistance to conform with EFA - focus on school management; developing training centers for students and teachers for human rights education; program on “Student Learning Achievements” also within EFA framework; long-term interest in teacher training especially on topic of minimum standard learning goals and critical thinking; focus on child-friendly schools and quality education; Also involved in Gender Task Force on Education with State and civil society reps. Educational Excellence and Equity Project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Policy development (School Management and Gender) ◆ Curriculum development ◆ Structural reform of schools ◆ Standard setting – policy recommendations. Pilot program development Teacher training/capacity building |
| US Agency for International | School reconstruction and support for curriculum development and teacher training in education for | Financial support Resource development |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Development (USAID)/ US Embassy | democratic citizenship | Teacher training/ capacity building School reconstruction |
| World Bank | Development of comprehensive education reform strategy for Education For All fast-track initiative (towards Millennium Development Goals); school reconstruction/rehabilitation; procurement of textbooks (privatizing Textbook distribution and publishing/printing and re-printing); education management information systems (database development); policy design and management; Restructuring of the Ministry and IPS; assessment and examinations; focus on basic and secondary education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education financing ◆ Restructuring of Ministry/IPS ◆ Policy Recommendations/ Education Strategy Development |

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