The Denial of Change in Educational Change: Systems of Ideas in the Construction of National Policy and Evaluation

THOMAS S. POPKEWITZ

Our conventional assumptions about school policy and evaluation are that schools are known and stable entities, and that the objectives and purposes of evaluation are relatively straightforward. Drawing initially on a Norwegian evaluation of Norway's educational system, this essay views the problems of policy studies and evaluation as related to social and cultural changes that produce ambiguity and uncertainty in the practices of education. Further, the object of inquiry in this essay is the structuring of educational knowledge. Central to this examination are the sociology of knowledge and postmodern political theories, asking about the categories, distinctions, and differentiations of schooling that govern problem-solving efforts to improve education. My concern is with a method of inquiry that examines the historical circumstances through which "reason" and "reasonable people" of schooling are constructed. I proceed in this manner to frame the study of policy research and evaluation in a problematic that does not take for granted its knowledge conditions. The focus on the systems of knowledge also enables a consideration of the patterns of social inclusion and exclusion produced in school practice. I argue that one of the major difficulties of contemporary policy studies is its nonreflexivity toward the ways in which its systems of knowledge change in historical circumstances. This lack of reflexivity about "reason" denies change and obscures the issues of power embedded in school practices.


After an Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) report was published on educational policy in Norway in 1988, the Norwegian government responded by developing a model of evaluation to assess the quality of its educational systems. At least two international meetings were held (see, e.g., Granheim, Kogan, & Lundgren, 1990) about the improvement and assessment of education in the Norwegian system. The discussions ranged from national testing to assess children's achievement to decentralized practices of teacher assessment processes that included action research and shared-decision making procedures.

The evaluation meeting embodied two assumptions that were in tension with each other: One was that schools need to respond to important although uncertain social and economic transformations that are themselves only barely discernable. The second assumption was that it is the role of school policy and assessment to direct the administration of school reforms so that there is a greater relation or harmony between social and educational changes. Policy and school evaluation were to give clarity and direction to school planning.

While the first assumption of contingency is logically at odds with the second assumption of social administration, the world of practice admits no such conflict. That is, I want to make a distinction between the logic of practice versus a practice of logic in educational planning. While logic would say that contingency and social administration are in opposition to each other, the practical organization of 19th century "problem solving," which we now think of as "social policy," joined the two. Accompanying the massive 19th century changes in Europe and North America were particular knowledge practices to "police" the territories of the nation-states through new social institutions and planning technologies. The social institutions of health, education, and employment, among others, were invented to control the uncertainties (and risks) and tame the chance produced by social changes while, at the same time, providing strategies of social administration that would produce progress.

The ordering principles of science were central to the "taming of chance," to borrow a phrase from Ian Hacking (1990). Perhaps the best-known strategy of the new practical reason of administration was statistics and the reason of probability. Statistics, a French word for state or political arithmetic, was a strategy for social administration. It was deployed in the 19th century to classify people into groups or populations in order to provide a governing system in the face of health epidemics, the growth of commerce, increases in industrialization, and urbanization—each accompanied by liberal political doctrines about the role of the state in the care of the individual. (Statistics originally involved both qualitative and quantitative data, but that is another story). One can think of theories of childhood development, the new work identities constructed through statistics of employment/unemployment, and urban planning as different social strategies to control chance (and risk) in the name of administering progress. Thus, historical

THOMAS S. POPKEWITZ is a professor of curriculum and instruction at The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 225 N. Mills Street, Madison, WI 53706; e-mail: tspopkew@facstaff.wisc.edu. His research focuses on the politics of knowledge, examining the "systems of reason" in curriculum, teaching, and teacher education reforms and research.
contingencies were to be controlled (tamed) through a joining of social policy, social administration, scientific reason, and moral/religious dimensions.

I tell this history of the social administration of chance to point out how seemingly contradictory assumptions of contingency and administration "make sense" as a practical reason in the governing of social transformations. The joining of the problem of chance with the administration of change underlies the "practical sense-making" of the Norwegian policies and evaluation. The discussion of the evaluation began with the uncertainties of the present and then proceeded to order, divide, and classify in a way to administer those changes. But the "reason" that ordered the Norwegian discussion is also the reason that orders other national reforms.

The reason or way of "making sense" embodied in the practices of studying policy is what I seek to make problematic in this discussion about research and evaluation. My starting point is to take the knowledge of school policy as the object of study. Focusing on the knowledge of policy as a practice makes it possible to consider a significant "fact" of modern life: Power is exercised less through brute force and more through the ways in which knowledge (the rules of reason) constructs the "objects" by which we organize and act on the issues, problems, and practices of daily life.

This intervention in the study of school policy entails three overlapping foci. One is to consider school reform as a practice of social administration. But the social administration that I speak about is not in the formal organizational practices or processes, but in the knowledge which orders and disciplines action and participation. The second and a related focus is to examine the system of "reason" in schooling as generating principles about social inclusion and exclusion. Where most policy analyses consider inclusion and exclusion as problems of group and individual representation and access, my concern is different. It is how the "problem solving" of policymaking and educational research qualifies and disqualifies individuals in the sense of constructing principles that normalize and divide the capabilities of teachers and students. In the final sections of this essay, I explore the difficulty of current research and evaluation when it reproduces the existing systems of "reason" in the construction of research and evaluation. I argue that policy studies reproduce the assumptions of the existing "commonsense" of schooling and therefore yield a recapitulation rather than critical analysis of the changing governing patterns. The use of the "commonsense" of schooling as the frame of reference for the categories of research denies change in the process of change.

Policy, Policing, and the Social Administration of Change: State Governing and the Discourses of Educational Sciences

Like many contemporary evaluations of school reforms, the Norwegian reforms and evaluation express the complexity of centralized and decentralized strategies. They focus on improving children's achievement but also on helping teachers become more professionally competent through school-based evaluations and action research. At the same time, central testing and measurement strategies are introduced for the state to monitor the overall performance of its school system and to ensure that a just and equitable system is achieved.

Underlying the evaluation strategies at both the local and national level is a general historical assumption of social administration. A multi-layered approach to reform and evaluation is to shape and fashion the improvement of schools, the competence of teachers, and the achievement and "being" of children. The governing of the school was at-a-distance through the principles that were to underlie the "nature" of participation (such as shared decision making and community involvement) and principles that ordered the characteristics that defined personal aspirations and guided parents' and teachers' actions (such as giving "voice" to people who previously were not included in school decision making).

Knowledge as Governing Systems

In the research and evaluation of the Norwegian reforms was a belief that policy produces progress through rationalizing the processes of social and individual improvement. Such knowledge of progress is a historical construction and an effect of power. The practical rationalities of progress, its know-how, expertise, and means of calculation, emerge from different historical trajectories to structure the field of possible actions and participation. In this sense, policy is a governing practice through the disciplining and ordering of conduct, and through the standards applied for "problem-solving."

The governing function of knowledge can be explored through examining the idea of auditing, which is becoming more commonplace in contemporary social policy. Auditing is a particular historical way of thinking and ordering personal actions as well as institutional practices as testable, monitorable, and calculable (Dean, 1996). But auditing is also a system of knowledge that disciplines how individuals engage in their own conduct and that is found in business accounting systems, school administration, and systems of teacher and instructional accountability. The auditing function governs problem solving as it inscribes the rules for discovering critical problems for the organization and the person.

In this sense, we can think of auditing as a way to "reason" that has practical consequences. It reshapes the conduct of professionals and organizations by asking that the standards of performance function as a technology to evaluate individuals. This is evident in systems of teacher education that focus on performance outcomes, as well as certain ways of thinking about children's learning. Other school practices of planning and evaluation also inscribe the reason of auditing to transform conduct by rendering the activities of the teacher and the child visible in terms of performance standards. One can only look to today's curriculum standards and performance outcome reforms to understand how auditing forms rules of changes as well as systems of accountability.

Auditing, then, is a knowledge that functions as an active intervention into organizational life, reshaping activities according to the norms of a fundamentally opaque expertise. It is a system of a particular form of life and a pattern of communication and action that socially administers conduct. Once made into a regularized element in the social life, auditing becomes a governing pattern of innovation.
The knowledge function of auditing provides a way to think more generally about educational policies and reform discourses. The principles that order school reforms form a particular condition of life and action that governs its patterns of innovation. Yet the governing principles of policy are so much part of "the making of sense" of school interventions that the principles of conduct are taken for granted rather than questioned, with debates focusing on the correctness of policies rather than the ways in which the "reason" of policy practices forms particular conditions of life.

With this knowledge function in mind, I proceed to discuss below the assumptions of social administration in educational policy, research, and evaluation. In particular, my interest is how the discourses of policy are social practices related to the social administration of the "self."

Knowledge and the Administration of the "Self"

The social administration or governing of teaching and children is not an invention of the current restructuring of education. The governing of the individual is one of the hallmarks of modernity that was visible in the 19th century (Hunter, 1994; Rose, 1989; Wagner, 1994). At that time, the modern state and the modern school developed alongside each other as systems of administration, both concerned with the production of the citizen, who could act within the new political and cultural institutions as a self-regulated and self-disciplined person (also see Popkewitz, 1991). Nineteenth century constitutional doctrines of liberty, rights, and law, which imposed limits on state activities, were based on the presupposition that individuals would act with personal responsibility to govern their own conduct. Yet, if the state was to be responsible for the welfare of its citizens, the state was expected to shape a particular type of individual who could master change and act "freely" through the application of rationality and reason. Policy was to "police" not only institutional development but also the construction of the "self" who could function within the new political relations of liberal democracy and capitalism.

The idea that the state could administer human freedom is captured in the new institutions that American historians associate with the Progressive Era and the welfare state prominent in European thought about social planning. A complex apparatus of institutions targeted the child and family through the school, the welfare system, the justice system, health, and employment. The new institutions tied the new social welfare goals of the state together with a particular form of scientific expertise. That expertise was concerned with a social planning that connected the scope and aspirations of public powers with the personal and subjective capacities of individuals. This problem of social administration of the individual gave attention to how power moved from issues of social organization to the self-disciplining of the individual (Elias, 1939/1978; Foucault, 1979).

The idea of social administration linked the 19th century movement of scientific rationalities to the social realm of planning. There was an assumption about science producing progress through systematic public provision, coherent public policy, and rational governmental intervention. In countries as diverse as Finland, Portugal, and the USA (Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1996; also see, e.g., Popkewitz, 1992; 1993a; Popkewitz & Simola, 1996), the social sciences were to organize the thinking, feeling, hoping, and "knowing" capacities of the productive citizen.

Peter Wagner (1994) gives focus to this new problem of organizing progress as the merging of the twin registers of administration and freedom. Freedom was no longer an abstract principle that existed outside of social relations but one that was developed by merging political rationalities with the principles through which individuals organized and ordered their action and participation in the world (also see Haskell, 1977; Silva & Slaughter, 1984; Wittrock, Wagner, & Wollman, 1991).

The formation of the modern mass schooling joined the registers of administration and freedom. Policy, curriculum, and educational research were constructed as systems of knowledge for the social administration of teachers and children. The reason of reform, historically, was to make the site of struggle as the administration of the self, namely, inner dispositions, sensibilities, and capabilities (Popkewitz, 1991). The project of the school in the U.S., for example, was one of developing a collective social identity and citizenship. Turn-of-the-century notions of "Americanization" inscribed in the missionary books about immigrants, early research about child development, and the curriculum social efficiency movements embodied a universalized image of the child.

With different ideological agendas, the narratives of childhood connected different discourses—liberalism, capitalism, and Enlightenment ideas born in the Protestant Reformation—into a single plane (Baker, 1998; Bloch & Popkewitz, in press; Franklin, 1987; Kliebard, 1986). Teacher education, as well, functioned in its new locations of higher education to reconstitute the identities of teachers in relation to the new cosmopolitan images that circulated in the university. The professional identities were to remake and revise the ethnicity and social radicalism found within the new immigrant groups (Murphy, 1990).

The register of social administration was evident in the Norwegian evaluation, only with different principles from those concerned with the collective identities of the turn of the century. It was seemingly "natural" in the Norwegian evaluation, for example, that the problem of social administration was not only institutional change but the inner "being" of the individual—"good" reform was brought into the dispositions and capabilities that guided the actions of the teacher. As one Norwegian administrator argued, teachers now need to ask the right question and to develop a "feeling of ownership for the knowledge gained and a feeling of responsibility for putting [that knowledge] to use in their own school." The strategies of shared decision making in schools and the professionalization of the teacher in the reform policy and school evaluation were to govern the construction of a "citizen." (The emphasis on "the self" as the site of change is evident in discussions of historical changes in the pedagogical discourses of Finland, Sweden, and the U.S. [Hultqvist, 1998; Popkewitz, 1993a; 1998a; Popkewitz & Simola, 1996]).

I raise this joining of the registers of social administration and freedom here because they have become so natural that they are accepted without question in policy studies. It is assumed that the sites of change are the inner characteristics and capabilities of the teacher or child. Such an assumption should be treated as continuously dangerous. The changing governing principles are effects of power and are in need of scrutiny and interpretation in policy research.
Reconstituting Governing Principles and the Construction of Educational Policy and Evaluation

To explore the changes in the problem of social administration, this section compares changes in contemporary reform discourses to transformations in other cultural, economic, and political arenas. I refer to these relations to education as “homologies” to point to similarities among different social fields without claiming any causality or origin. These homologies are to suggest that the study of school policy and evaluation lies in its relations to social transformations that have a historical contingency, rather than to assume the social transformations in studying current reforms. Further, and going against the grain, I argue that the knowledge of schooling is a social practice that has “real” consequences for action and possibilities, rather than assuming a dualism of policy and practice.

The State and Reconstituting the Governing of the Teacher

In some studies of policy, current changes are related to neoliberalism, a label applied to discuss change in the reduced role of the state in education through market reforms and privatization. As discussed later in this essay, this use of neoliberalism as a characterization of the politics and policies of reform misrecognizes the phenomena under scrutiny. One way to explore the changes in the social administration of education is to compare the Norwegian educational reforms with those of other countries such as Sweden and the USA.

At an organizational level, educational reforms have introduced a mixture of policies that combine centralized state steering with policies that “decentralize” decision making. The centralized/decentralized systems in contemporary reforms call for new types of governing practices through the discourses of state administration and scientific expertise. In the Scandinavian countries that had highly centralized state structures, that movement of reform created a greater role for local municipalities. In the USA, with a greater mixture of localized and federal systems of government, these changes have involved greater centralized practices that coexist with local governing of schooling since the 1950s. During the past few decades, this centralizing/decentralizing relation has shifted through increased state testing, curriculum standards, and steering through federal funding of reforms and research.

The organizational changes to a more decentralized system in Scandinavia also embody changes in the system of “reason” through which the reforms constitute action and participation. The changes in Norway’s neighbor, Sweden, are illustrative of the ways in which current reforms constitute principles of reason and the “reasonable person” (Popkewitz, 1996). Prior to current reforms, Swedish schools were organized through a rule-governed system defined through parliamentary legislation and the strong, centralized bureaucratic arm of the Swedish Board of Education. There was a detailed and prescribed ordering of instruction and curriculum. The responsibility of organizing and evaluating school subjects fell to the state ministry and bureaucracies, not the teacher. The new Swedish reforms produced a new mixture of national centralized and local decentralized evaluation measures.

Like their Norwegian counterparts, Swedish researchers were funded to develop standardized achievement tests and other statistical measures to assess national “goals” of equity and excellence. At the local level, school-based evaluations were designed to assist teachers and the community to work pragmatically to find solutions to local problems. Teacher training included teacher expertise in curriculum development, teacher professional assessment strategies (such as action research), and new assessment strategies of children’s growth through, for example, portfolio assessments. Underlying the new organization of planning and assessment was a “constructivist” or progressive notion of administration; that is, teachers, school administrators, and children were seen as “constructing” knowledge through applying problem-solving methods to contexts that have no fixed solutions.

The formation of the Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket) in 1991 and reformulation of the Swedish curriculum (Läroplan) produced a goal-driven conception of the state vis-à-vis the educational arena. General goals, including school subject time allocations, are set by the state for the curriculum and those goals function as a “steering” mechanism by which local communities can decide how best to proceed in defining the content of the education. A problem-solving attitude was inscribed that accepts a plurality of solutions to social problems. The new centralized/decentralized school system also required a new mentality of school administrators who functioned as “school leaders,” educated in the discourses of local administration found in less state-ruled systems such as the U.S.

New governing practices involved a particular pragmatic outlook. The state bureaucrat, the teacher, and the school administrator are constructed through images of a “problem-solving capability where uncertainty and flexibility replace state rule-governed patterns of certainty and control that formerly governed the Swedish professional subjectivity. Whereas turn of the century practices emphasized the clear relation between social collective goals of the nation and “making” children individually responsible and morally upright, the contemporary changes in Swedish school practices embodied changes in the reason and in the “reasonable person” who acted in the school system. The new school actors are “empowered” by being flexible problem-solvers who construct their own meanings and learn in cooperative groups. State officials embody a new “mentality” for the problem solving expected to monitor school practices. The reconstructed official allows for multiple solutions to problems, as one is no longer required to find prescribed answers to state monitoring problems. New systems of knowledge in teacher education, as well, embody a pattern of social administration based on notions of contingency. A decentralized assessment system for monitoring curriculum goals emerged in teacher education, focusing on the new responsibilities of the teacher to evaluate classrooms, exemplified in “portfolio assessment” and action research in the training of teachers.

My argument is not to consider the organization changes as producing new professional mentalities of the teacher. Rather, I am focusing on how certain ways of “reason” are embedded and related to social changes in order for those changes “to make sense.” Further, and argued in the following section, the new problem-solving attitude is not universal or free from power relations. The problem-solving individual in educational discourses is homologous to images found in other social fields, such as those of intellectual fields and the economy. “Making sense” and evaluating school policy is to render entrenched cultural judgments...
which constitute the forms of school life as open for judgment by exposing their habits, ways of acting, and thinking as contingent (see Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999).

The Social Sciences: Pragmatic Knowledge and a Problem-Solving Individuality

The changes in the narrative about the governance patterns in schooling are homologous to changes in the narratives and images of the “self” in other social fields. If we think about intellectual disciplines, for example, the images of the problem-solving teacher and child are related to a movement for interdisciplinary knowledge that emphasizes “constructivism.”

Since at least the end of World War II there has been a shift in the systems of reasoning that, at its most simple level, refers to the concern with how knowledge is socially produced and constructed (see, e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Butler, 1993; Giddens, 1990; Hall, 1986. In education, see Cherryholmes, 1988; Giroux, 1992; Kohli, 1995; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). The different strands concern how knowledge is socially constructed, in some cases drawing on anthropological and sociological perspectives and others on psychology (one can compare the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu with the psychology of Howard Gardner). But as Bloor (1997) argues, the epistemological changes that relate to constructivism have multiple intellectual trajectories and no clear definition.

If there is a commonality, the commonality is in the emphasis on fluidity, diversity, and the apparent break up of permanence in the formation of knowledge and individuality. As expressed in the Norwegian administrator’s comment earlier, identity is no longer understood in terms of universal norms of competence but in terms of norms that speak about the multiple and pragmatic actions through which individuals negotiate and construct knowledge. Today’s “individuality” is spoken about less as stable, and more as a “problem-solving” and flexible “self” related to a plurality of localized spaces. While this description may seem “to fit” what some have called “the postmodern condition,” it is also found in recent discussions of modernity that move among cultural and economic realms.

In education, pedagogical constructivism is dominated by particular cognitive psychology and symbolic interactionist approaches to reform, although there is continual debate about the relation of the social to the individual. An image is projected of the “new” teacher (and child) as an “empowered,” problem-solving individual capable of responding flexibly to problems that have no clear set of boundaries or singular answers. The constructivist teacher (and child) is expressed in the didactic problems of teaching science and mathematics as well as in teacher education reforms where it is asserted that “the generic task of education” consists of “teaching students how to make knowledge and meaning—to enact culture . . ., ” turning away from “a template for a single conception” of reform to “multiple models” (Holmes Group, 1990, pp. 10 & 6; also see The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989). The teacher is assumed to possess a pragmatic individuality that is tied to the contingencies of situations in which problems arise.

Economics: The Pragmatic, Problem-Solving Worker

Constructivism in economics has a similar ring to what is found in intellectual writing. The new worker and new work environment are guided by the “the law of the micro-cosm.” The new work context is flexible, and is horizontally structured to involve specific projects that do not have rigid management hierarchies (Fatis, 1992). The smaller work units are said to “empower” workers and to develop flexible, responsive environments in which workers can respond quickly to customer demands. “Instead of defining the individual by the work he is assigned to, [we] now regard productive activity as the site of deployment of the person’s personal skills” (Donzelot, 1991, p. 252). The flexible, “problem-solving” “capabilities” of the worker are exemplified in a report about education of the new worker in the metalworker industry (The International Labour Organization, 1994; also see Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). The work context of technologies (e.g., robots), organization principles (such as “just-in-time” production), and new materials have, it is argued, re-visionsed the production process and the worker.

Personal characteristics, the metal worker report concludes, are central to education, including self-confidence, self-discipline, the ability to define and resolve problems, and the “capacity and willingness to learn” (International Labour Organization, 1994, p. 23). Quality, productivity, and flexibility of the worker are described as an educational focus on the inner characteristics and dispositions of the individual. The new worker is characterized through the following equation:

“I understand it” + “I can do it” + “I care about it” = “capacity” (International Labour Organization, p. 23)

At this point, one can laud the changes by saying that education is responding in a healthy and productive way to its outer-environment. Again, my argument is not about the inherent goodness or badness of local decision making and a flexible problem-solving person. Instead, my argument places the changes in the knowledge systems as homologous to changes in the social administration of individuality occurring in other social fields.

This interpretative strategy recognizes that research about school policy and pedagogy cannot assume that discourses about “problem-solving” are neutral, context free concepts about children’s experiences. The problem-solving that the individual engages in—how to find an answer to a mathematical algorithm, or in previous pedagogies, how to fill in worksheets or items on a standardized test—requires certain prior rules regarding which problems and reasonable solutions are (and which are not) the effects of power (see Kittler, 1985/1990).

Joan Scott (1992) expressed this need to understand “experience” as socially constructed. She argues that there is a need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce [our] experience. It is not...
the individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces. (pp. 25–26)

Following Scott, the categories of experience in schooling are not natural, but “things” to be exposed for their contingent character. The object of inquiry should give attention to the cognitive structure of knowledge as forming intent and purpose rather than accept unproblematically the content of knowledge to study its effects on social relationships.

Evaluation as Inclusions/Exclusions

One of the major themes of the Norwegian evaluation was a national commitment to equity and justice in education. Again, this commitment circulates in most Western nations. Studies of the effects of policy have tended to focus on these commitments through examining the effects of policy on social relationships. A major question directing educational research since the late 1950s has been to understand to what extent policy produces practices of greater social inclusion.

This idea of inclusion as a goal of social policy underlies different equity policies of the post–World War II welfare states, such as the European comprehensive school reforms and the U.S. War on Poverty. Current U.S. research on school vouchers and choice, school achievement in mathematics, as well as on the role of gender and race in producing differential success in school are evidence of this commitment articulated through scientific investigations. Class and social stratification stand as the most important categories of research about inclusion and exclusion, although more recently, gender, ethnicity, and race have been added to the study of equity.

These studies of equity tend to be constructed through a particular problematic (Popkewitz & Lindblad, in press). The effects of policy are studied through treating exclusion and inclusion as distinct and separate concepts. Inclusion is a point, at least in principle, in which society can become completely free from power (totally inclusive) through achieving perfect, universally harmonious relations. From this equity problematic, inclusion is the privileged concept. Exclusion is understood as a concept to locate different access or participation among predefined groups. Exclusion is thus a practice to be eliminated through the development of inclusionary systems. Studies related to social policies identify the forces and practices that permit or limit social and economic access, for example, with the intent to identify practices that develop a more inclusionary society and economic structure.

While remaining sensitive to structural issues of equity in the representation of marginalized groups (see, e.g., Laclau, 1995; Mouffe, 1995), I want to focus on the problem of inclusion and exclusion as a single concept (inclusion/exclusion) related to the problem of knowledge and the social administration of the “self.” Inclusion is a practice that makes sense only against the background of something simultaneously excluded (Goodwin, 1996). This relation, as I will argue below, provides a strategy to consider how educational discourses qualify or disqualify individuals for participation in the sense of ordering, dividing, and normalizing the inner capabilities and characteristics of the child.

Educational Knowledge as the Production of Inclusion/Exclusion

The relation of inclusion/exclusion in educational knowledge can be pursued through thinking of policy and school programs as “map-making” (Anderson, 1991; Douglas & Hull, 1992; Goodman, 1978). As a road map tells us about distances and routes for travel, a discursive map “tells” us symbolically how to order the objects of the world for scrutiny and practice. In schooling, particular “maps” are drawn to promote a more inclusive school through categories such as “learning disadvantaged,” “the needy child,” “at-risk family,” and “urban” education. If we think of these categories as “map-making,” we understand them as not merely labels ascribed to groups of people who need special help in teaching. The categories function to organize the territories of membership by producing boundaries between the members and the nonmembers.

The maps drawn about children are not neutral but are practices that divide and normalize. That is, the distinctions that order children’s capabilities function to divide membership and nonmembership along a continuum of value through which individual capability and competence are constructed. The categories of learning, for example, are inserted as part of ways to “reason” about educational phenomena and to differentiate between children through an unspoken normalization about the capabilities of those who “learn,” or are “at-risk.”

The pattern of division and normalization in pedagogy can be examined through a recent study of urban and rural education (Popkewitz, 1998a; also see Mirón, 1996). At a policy level, urban and rural education is to provide for children in need of special help because of poverty and/or discrimination. But at a concrete level of practice, the distinctions between the urban and rural child have little to do with geography. They have to do with the fabrication of identities that directs attention to the inner capabilities, dispositions, and habits of the child and the family who are constituted as “urban” or “rural.” These fabrications, however, are not fictions, as the discursive practices of education constitute fields of cultural practice and cultural production.

To understand the discourses of urban and rural education as constituting practices of inclusion/exclusion, one can understand that the qualities of being an urban child can be possessed also by someone who lives in the suburbs. At the same time, not all children who live in the city are classified as urban—no one “speaks” of the wealthy who live in the city or those who go to private schools as urban (or as rural). Upon further inspection, there are no categories that stand in direct opposition to urban or rural education. Yet even with the absence of categories, everyone knows “who” is being talked about. Everyone “knows” that the urban child is an “inner-city” child who embodies norms and capabilities that are different from what continually goes unnamed! What is named and goes unnamed is an effect of power. Further, there were no different systems of ordering and differentiating learning, curriculum, classroom planning, and assessment between the urban and rural child in the discourses of the schools studied. In practice, the urban and rural child are classified through the same pedagogical distinctions.
The discourses of urban and rural education do not refer to a physical, geographical space, but refer to a social "space" that interned and enclosed the child. The distinctions and categories in the studied schools placed the urbanness and the ruralness of the child as different from "others" who are not explicitly named. The urban/rural qualities were of a child who lacked self-esteem, who needed remediation, who learned through "doing" rather than through abstract knowledge and thus had different learning styles from "other" children, and a child who required teachers with different teaching styles in order to address the differences in the capabilities of the child.

If we play with language here, the absence of the capabilities and dispositions needed for a child’s success and achievement also becomes a presence from which teachers organize classroom practices. The qualities given to the urbanness and ruralness of the child became performative. The learning-by-doing, the children’s learning styles, and the teacher’s styles of teaching were constructed through the normalizing effects of the distinctions and differentiations that “made” the urban and rural child different. The child stood outside of normality, in a social space from which the child could never become of the average.

The study of urbanness and ruralness of the child gives attention to the politics of the systems of reason in social policies and evaluation. This politics relates to the governing through the distinctions that qualifies and disqualifies individuals for participation. Yet most educational policy and research assumes the distinctions of the urbanness and ruralness of the child through historically mobilized discourses applied to the structuring of problem solving.

The classification of the urban and the rural child is not only a way of reasoning about teachers’ practices, but is a historically mobilized discourse that circulates in policy and educational research. The particular rules of reason form a politics of school knowledge; that politics is about saving the needy child. My example about the “reason” that circulates in policy and research about urban and rural education also throws into question the distinction often made between the formulation of policy and the realization of policy—a version of the theory/practice distinction that continually appears, for example, in calls for a personal or “useful” knowledge about education, and in thinking of schools as a loosely coupled system in which policy statements are seen as different from the “actual” practices of teachers. The dichotomies may be useful when talking about organizational characteristics of schools but they fall apart when considering the circulation of rules that order and classify the practices of policy and pedagogy. The discourse rules in policy and policy analysis overlap with other educational practices to construct the registers of social administration.

The Alchemies of School Subjects

To this point, I have focused on policy and pedagogical practices as a problem of governing and the social administration of the “self.” I have suggested that historically the inventions of policy studies and research are practices of social administration. But my concern with social administration is different from the conventional concerns with the institutions and the organization of system actors by focusing on the systems of reason in education as producing fields of cultural practice and cultural production. In the previous section, the urbanness/ruralness of the child illustrated the overlapping of policy, research, and pedagogical constructions through the rules of reason that normalize and divide the “being” of the child. In this section, I focus on the rules of reason through which school subjects are produced in order to consider further the problem of policy studies and social inclusion/exclusion. Central to this discussion is the alchemy of pedagogy.

We can think of curriculum as performing an alchemy on disciplinary knowledge. As the sorcerer of the Middle Ages sought to turn lead into gold, modern curriculum theory produces a magical change as it turns the specific intellectual traditions of historians or physicists, for example, into teaching practices.

To understand the alchemies of curriculum, we can approach science, social science, mathematics, and literary studies as systems of knowledge produced within complex and pragmatic sets of social relations. The knowledge accepted as sociology or anthropology, for example, involves particular institutional relations and systems of reasoning about research, teaching, and professional status. When Thomas Kuhn (1970) spoke about “revolutionary” and “normal” science, in one sense he was speaking of the competing standards and rules for “telling the truth” and the different stakes that are authorized (and who wants to be authorized) as groups compete.

The norms of “truth,” however, are not only influenced by the internal dimensions of a discipline. They are produced in intellectual fields that relate ideas to social constellations. Heilbron (1990/1995), in examining the formation of the social sciences in the 19th century, focuses on the breakdown of theology and church teaching in organizing the knowledge of society. The breakthrough, he argues, made possible the secularization of conceptions and representations, and the development of differentiated intellectual fields that made practical the modern social sciences.

A disciplinary field that school pedagogy draws on exists continually in two social spaces at the same time. One is the disciplinary space in which the internal rules of knowledge production are created, sustained, and changed. There are particular grammars and styles of expression in the patterns of communication in psychology, physics, and linguistics, for example, which discipline individual research of those fields. The second social space is the cultural and political contexts in which disciplines function. Today, the production of disciplinary knowledge occurs in relation to particular social and cultural constellations, such as that of state agencies concerned with welfare questions about the effects of poverty, philanthropic organizations who “target” certain social issues and groups in society to help, and commercial enterprises interested in a certain consumerism. The knowledge of science is the network and relations between these two spaces (see, e.g., Latour, 1993). Further, what counts as knowledge involves struggles among different groups within a discipline about the norms of participation, truth, and recognition.

Whereas disciplines involve competing sets of ideas about research (we can call these epistemes or “schools of thought”), school subjects tend to treat knowledge as logical systems of unambiguous content for children to learn. What appears in school as “science,” “math,” “composition,” or “art” has little relation to the intellectual field that bears the same name, but is a pedagogical construction that con-
forms to expectations related to the school timetable, conceptions of childhood, and conventions of teaching that transform knowledge and intellectual inquiry into a strategy for governing the "self"—how to "make" the inner dispositions and sensitivities of a moral, ethical being.

We can say that this transference from the social spaces of disciplinary inquiry to pedagogy is an alchemy; moving the disciplinary fields of knowledge production in physics or mathematics, for example, into categories of "concept mastery," psychological registers about "cooperative small-group learning," and concerns about the "motivation" and the "self-esteem" of children. If we think of current notions of problem solving in current curriculum reforms, the focus is on the processes of children's thinking or on a teacher's pedagogical knowledge. This focus leaves aside questions about the two spaces of science that I spoke of earlier—the networks of relations in which and the discursive and rhetorical practices through which a science tells "its truth" in different historical moments—in the construction of curriculum.

Perhaps the alchemy of school subjects is necessary because children are not scientists or artists. But that is not my point. My objective is to recognize the significance of this alchemy to the study of schooling as a governing practice that relates to the issue of inclusion/exclusion in four related ways.

First, the recent reform that gives attention to the pedagogical content of school subjects stabilizes the content of the disciplines in order to focus on the social administration of the child. This occurs as reforms re-visions the complexities and contingencies of discipline knowledge as things of logic. Concepts and generalizations are taken as logical, non-temporal structures that function as foundations from which learning occurs. The alchemy makes it possible in schooling to talk about children's learning of science or social studies as involving conceptions and misconceptions of concepts, as if concepts were stable and fixed entities of knowledge.

Yet when we examine research at the cutting edge of science, we can "see" a knowledge that is quite different from that enshrined in the school curriculum. It involves debates and struggles about what is to be studied and how. Further, the conception of knowledge used by scientists privileges strategies to make the familiar strange, to think about the mysterious and unfamiliar, and to raise questions precisely about that which is taken for granted. The rules of curriculum are quite different as they privilege the stable, fixed, and categorical properties of knowledge, even in recent "constructivist pedagogies" (see Popkewitz, 1991, chap. 7).

Second, the alchemy of school subjects that makes the events of the world seem as things of logic removes any social mooring from knowledge. The debate and struggle that produce disciplinary knowledge are glossed over as a stable system of ideas is presented to children.

Third, the loss of the social mooring of disciplines constructs a moral order. The cultural images and salvation stories about the relation of the individual to society that inhere in the selection and organization of curriculum are obscured through a focus on the logical structures of knowledge. The categories, distinctions, and differentiation of school subjects as illustrated in the hidden curriculum work of the past decades inscribe purpose and direction through the classificatory systems applied in curriculum (see, e.g., Goodson, 1987; Popkewitz, 1987). But my point is further than that of the hidden curriculum, as the alchemy of school subjects constructs the rules of order, relations, and identity from which teachers and children are to act and participate.

Fourth, the alchemy of school subjects inscribes a particular focus in the social administration of the child. This occurs as school subject knowledge is assumed as stable "entities," which then allows instruction to attend to the organization of the "being" of the child who is to learn the conceptions of school subjects and the stability of subject knowledge. The alchemy makes the individual as the site of struggle through a populist rhetoric (listening to children's voices, empowering children, helping children learn through cooperative strategies, etc.). But the populism that is to empower denies the social mooring of the disciplinary knowledge that orders relations and constructs identities for action and participation. The alchemy of pedagogical policy and research inscribes the unproblematic distinctions and differentiations about the family, the community, and "the child" that are not considered as socially constructed and the effects of power.

It is at this point that we can join the previous discussion of the alchemy of school subjects with the production of inclusions and exclusions. The seemingly universal and stable concepts embodied in the school subjects are neither universal nor stable. They are concepts that are historically constructed in relation to the specific capacities for participation that are not equally available for all in society. Let me explore this briefly.

When pedagogical practices focus on innovative strategies such as cooperative learning, expert teaching, or peer learning, as examples, to effect "good" teaching, the distinctions embodied in the "good teaching" are not universal concepts. The concepts of "good," "successful," and "expert" are related to particular capabilities drawn from particular groups who have the power to sanctify and consecrate their dispositions as those appropriate for the whole society. The capabilities of the child, which Walkerdine (1988) explored empirically with child-centered pedagogies, for example, are a normalized vision of the "natural" child that is not natural but socially constructed as "truth." The emphasis on verbalization and justification in child-centered pedagogies, she argues, relates to particular gendered and bourgeois conceptions. What is made to seem as universal and inclusionary functions to exclude. The exclusions occur through a normativity that orders the child's "problem-solving" abilities and divides the child through the inner characteristics that "make" for success and failure.

Thus, the alchemy of school subjects functions as a double. The reform policies and research are to make possible increased social inclusion through the representations of groups in social organizations, while at the same time, the discursive practices normalize, intern, and enclose the child so that some children can never be "of the average." The inclusion/exclusion is produced not necessarily by the child's race, class, or gender but through a normalizing and racializing of the qualities of the child through the principles generated for participation and success. The divisions are inscribed in the distinctions that make for a child's good or poor "self concept," or in the "proper" or improper family habits for a child to read at home or to do homework. The system of inclusion/exclusion is formed through the naturalizing of the being of the child that is embodied in the concrete narratives and images of policy and research.
rather than through an exclusion based on the overt classification of groups who are represented in social policy.

In the previous sections, I explored how the commonsense of policy and pedagogical practices embody systems of reason that differentiate and divide. "Auditing," constructivism, and the alchemy of school subjects were explored as different sites in the struggle for the soul of the child, but the principles generated are not equal for all and function to qualify and disqualify children for participation and action. The insertion of the knowledge conditions of schooling into research, I want to argue now, involves a particular conservatism as motion and activity are given focus instead of change. At this point, one might suggest that school policy studies ought to be a normative discourse about universals for the child to ascribe to and that there is an obligation to assert certain types of problem solving as worthwhile and appropriate. Further, the problem of representation is still an important element of social policy as there is no equal representation of groups. This essay does recognize these as issues of policy and research. It does argue, however, that such foci can, if left unproblematic, misrecognize the politics of policy studies and research that are inscribed through systems of reason. The function of policy and research as registers of social administration need to be considered through exploring them as practical technologies of governing and producing systems of inclusion/exclusion.

The Denial of Change in the Process of Change: Categories of Past Conditions as Interpretations of New Relations

The discussion has focused on the need to make problematic what has been assumed; the "reason" of pedagogical policy and practices as governing practices in the construction of identity; and these knowledge practices of policy, pedagogy, and the alchemy of school subjects simultaneously constructing systems of inclusion/exclusion. In this section, I want to pursue how the knowledge systems of policy and research can deny change. One can think of the previous discussions about how policy and research take for granted their own knowledge conditions through inserted the framework of their own contemporaneity. There is no conceptual leverage in which to pursue change except as activity and motion. But to consider further the denial of change in policy and reform-oriented research, I first consider the seductive rhetoric of school reform. Second, I consider the issue of the denial of change through examining how educational policy studies conserve the system of reference of the political system when it does not make the categories and postulates of knowledge as its object of inquiry. My example is the use of neoliberalism as a category of interpretation and critique in policy studies.

The Seductive Reasoning of Reform: Populism and Prophesies

Policy and research discourses have both a rhetorical and a logical structure (Rooney, 1989). More often than one would like to believe, the seductively qualities of the rhetorical structure of reform are intricately woven into logical structures that define the truth value of knowledge. My earlier discussion about the distinction between the practice of logic and the logic of reason (the tying of contingency and social planning) approached this issue through focusing on how reason (a practical logic) produces a commonsense if not a formal logical consistency.

The seductive rhetoric in contemporary reform is found in the deployment of concepts of participation, collaboration, and democratization. Reform discourses assume a certain stability and universality to participation, as when there is talk of "collaboration" and discussion about different role groups (stakeholders) involved in school or classroom decision making. The stability and universality occurs as these concepts are used without any social mooring that locates the particular sets of norms and performances of participation as effects of power. The concepts of "voice," evoked in Swedish, Norwegian, and U.S. discussions of school reform, also assume a certain universality to participation. Differences are invoked hermeneutically to make sense of a group's distinctive cultural content that is to stand against and in resistance to some other, authorized voice—the "voice" is made to seem as a naturalized expression of groups that have been socially and economically marginalized.

In each of the above instances, the concepts of change have no historical recognition of the different relations through which words (e.g., participation) are deployed as concepts in fields of power. The focus of current reforms on giving greater access and representation is seductively appealing; however the rhetoric cannot be accepted unproblematically and ahistorically. Participation is a word that functions rhetorically within a particular semantic field to articulate a seemingly unmediated truth. The teacher and child of today's reforms are to be "empowered" and given "voice" as they construct their own knowledge. It is the local and the individual—the school personnel, parents, and community, and not the state—that is asserted as having the primary responsibility for creating long-lasting change. The rhetoric of participatory reform gives value to a decentralized school that is more collaborative, producing a more just and equitable society through local action. An important call for systemic reform in the U.S., for example, invokes a warning that "unless coherence and clarity" is given in school policy and practice, the "relative quality of the education offered to less advantaged students" will be eroded (Smith & O'Day, 1990, p. 262). "Simple justice dictates that skills and knowledge deemed necessary for basic citizenship and economic opportunity be available to all future citizens—that is, access must be distributed equality . . ." (Smith & O'Day, p. 263).

The rhetoric of reform in the U.S. draws on a particular populist discourse of prophesy and redemption. Redemption and salvation are through the local and the individual. The discourses of reform are to give teachers, parents, and "communities" who are people "at the bottom" and, in a phenomenological gesture, viewed as the most knowledgeable about what needs to be done to improve schooling, voice and empowerment. The words provide a sense of continuity and continual movement toward a progressive realization of the goals of schools. The phrases quoted above about citizenship and economic opportunity are motifs of progress that could just as easily have been quoted from a reform document written in the 1880s, the 1960s, or the 1970s as from a current policy document.

Notwithstanding the populist invocations, participation is not an unambiguous antidote to state bureaucracies by contributing toward a self-motivated, responsible and ac-
tive citizenry, but embodies particular historical norms generated through practice of social administration. At one level, the current rhetoric about participation embodies conceptual distinctions that are drawn from a 19th century dualism that separated civil society (the local school, the community, the professional occupations) from the state (Rose, 1996). The dualism of state/civil society is part of a map that disconnected, at least symbolically, the private (home) from the public, the economic from the social, and the state from the civil society. Current discussions of “voice” and empowerment recapitulate this dualism, which separates public and state practices from those of individuals who act with personal responsibility to govern their own conduct.

But the separation of state and civil society (as well as private and public, objective and subjective) that underlies policy and research ignores the patterns of social administration that transverse each set of dualisms. The rules of participation join political rationalities with the governing principles through which the performances of participation are enacted. Merelman (1976) argues, for example, that the notions of participation in U.S. behavioral political science in the 1930s constructed symbols to reestablish the ideals of American politics in contexts where direct participation in civic matters was no longer possible. The new symbols included notions of a “political culture,” “pluralism,” and “political socialization”—concepts that resonated with pre-existing beliefs about political community and public consensus but embodied new forms of abstract relations exemplified in a representative government and participation that was at a distance such as the citizen who participated through the act of voting. The new techniques of political polls and surveys of public opinion enabled people to believe that they were being consulted and that it was possible for people to act purposefully in the changing circumstances of governing. The theories and methods of behavioral political science, Merelman argues, helped reduce strain between the changing role of government and the cherished beliefs about public life.

At a different level, feminist writings illustrate that the notions of democratic participation were constructed with a particular gendered quality—describing the attributes for participation that, first, separated the public and the private and then defined a public rationality in a manner that was to exclude women (Lloyd, 1984; Pateman, 1988). The “nature” of participation privileged the manners, views of rationality, and public discourses associated with the “reasoning” of men and placed the “public” in opposition to the dispositions of women who “resided” in the privacy of the home.

Thus, while participation is a seductive rhetoric of policy studies and educational research, the rules that “make” for participation are not universal and need to be interrogated rather than assumed as a universal, stable concept that is applied across time and place. While I recognize that prophecies as well as populism have political functions and populism has had moments with radical implications within the U.S. (Goodwyn, 1978), we need to “remember” that the modern prophecies about a better world are built on a long tradition of the social sciences tied to state policy and planning (Popkewitz, 1984; Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1996). The populism of reform joins the register of social administration with the register of freedom without recognizing the tensions and contradictions, such as those related to the issues of inclusion/exclusion.

Old Distinctions and New Conditions of Social Administration

The seductive reasoning of educational policy and research is related to broader concern about the conduct of educational studies. The concern is that the knowledge of educational policy studies conserves its own systems of reference and its own contemporaneity when it does not make the categories and postulates of knowledge as an object of inquiry. Educational studies tend to take the content of knowledge as representative of social and personal intent rather than making the cognitive structures of knowledge as an object of inquiry. Research is situated in the same framework as its object of study and thus results in nothing more than the recapitulation of the existing assumptions rather than a critical analysis. A consequence is that the conceptions of science in educational studies can be “misleading,” to draw, in part, on the discussions of Wallerstein (1991). One of the problems of contemporary research, Wallerstein argues, is that “the presuppositions [of social science], once considered liberating of the spirit, serve today as the central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world” (p. 1).

This barrier to understanding policy through reproducing its own systems of reference can be explored through examining the category of “neoliberalism” in education. We can think of “neoliberalism” as a salvation story that combines the Chicago School of Economics thought with social policies through concepts about markets, privatization, and client “choice” in the social “delivery” of welfare practices. While initially given a policy “life” in the policies of the Thacher government in Britain and of Reagan in the U.S., and in World Bank policies toward “developing” nations, neoliberalism is today incorporated into U.S. and British Labour government discussions of “the third way.” The new politics is to combine a more conservative economic policy with the social (caring) commitments of the welfare state. While neoliberalism is not one set of policies but multiple trajectories in terms of social welfare practices, policy studies from the left argue that neoliberalism has lead to the dismantling of the welfare state through incorporating a conservative economic logic as one of social and cultural practices.

I focus on “neoliberalism” because it is a rhetorical phrase that provides a symbolic canopy to both planning and critiques of the policy-related research described earlier in this essay. We can think of much of the current decentralizing reforms in the Nordic countries as part of a larger restructuring of the welfare state that is, at one level, thought as related to neoliberal thought. Neoliberalism is embedded in discussions about increasing participation of parents, charter schools, and systems of accountability and school auditing in the U.S. that are, at one level, part of a broader international policy discussion of privatization of education and “partnerships.”

Critical analyses of neoliberal policies have helped draw attention to failure of school “choice” plans to improve the efficiency and the responsiveness of schools to groups that have previously been marginalized (for the most comprehensive and insightful analysis of such reforms see Whitty, Powers, & Halpin, 1998). Such research does shift the
moral and political rhetoric of educational struggles. But the analyses of neoliberalism (markets, choice, privatization) are still enmeshed in the framework of its own contemporaneity and are thus unable to make problematic the knowledge conditions that circulate as effects of power.

While it is popular in critical studies of policy in Europe and the U.S. to label neoliberalism as a “conservative restoration” and as giving up the collective obligations of the welfare state, such analyses, I believe, are misplaced and mistaken as they deny change to describe the changes occurring. The mistake of such analyses is that they accept the framework of the categories in the political arena as the historical phenomenon to be scrutinized, even when such analyses are seemingly critical. Such a strategy of accepting the categories of the existing frameworks is, I believe, dangerous. The very concepts of analysis (neoliberalism, markets, etc.) become tautological as the neoliberal critiques embody a particular liberal notion of progressive time and development that is linear, continuous, and unidirectional, whether that notion of time is Lockean or a Hegelian dialectical (see, e.g., Chakrabarty, 1992; Gupta, 1994). A consequence of the frameworks in which the narratives and critiques of neoliberalism occur is that they intern and enclose salvation narratives of schooling through the rules applied about change.

What is called “neoliberalism” and the dismantling of the welfare state is more appropriately a reconstruction of the governing practices that do not start with recent policies. Rather, the political discourses of neoliberalism are part of more profound social, cultural, and economic changes that occurred well before Thatcher in Britain or Reagan in the U.S. (see Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996; Boyer & Drache, 1996; Popkewitz, 1991; Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999; Wallerstein, 1991; Whitty, 1997).12

Further, neoliberalism is not one discourse exerted through fixed strategies and hierarchical applications of power that move uncontested; rather it is an overlay of multiple discourses or a hybridity that embodies a complex scaffolding of techniques and knowledge (Dussel, Tiramonti, & Birgin, 2000). Further, as Wagner (1994) and Rose (1999) have explored historically, the changes in politics and the circulation of power that order the registers of social administration are not merely an evolution of previous patterns but provide a substantively different field of relations that are not given attention to in the theories and critiques of neoliberalism (also, see Popkewitz, 1998b).

The deployment of the category of neoliberalism, then, is illustrative of a larger problem of research—the denial of change in theories of change. Policy studies need to reconsider the intellectual strategies deployed for understanding the changes in the social administration of the “self” that are occurring in education. Such a self-reflexivity requires an examination of the categories and postulates through which research engages in critique. As Wallerstein (1991) has argued in a somewhat different context, concepts and theories that were developed in the 19th century to understand social change are no longer adequate for considering the changing social conditions and political movements. I argue in the present paper that this reconceptualization involves a self-reflexivity about the systems of knowledge in education and in educational research. Without examining the commonsense of policy, research can conserve the very systems that are to be interpreted and engaged in critical conversations.

This brings me back to a paradox of the registers of social administration and freedom in the practices of reform. If the modern school is a governing practice, then contemporary studies of school policy and reform need to inquire into the changing principles generated for action and participation. To accept the categories and cognitive structuring in the space of schooling as the problem of study is to deny change in the process of change.

Some Concluding Thoughts

The different interventions in this essay were to position national policy and evaluation within a context of the knowledge of education as the object of study. I viewed change in education as a problem of the transformations in the patterns of the social administration, discussing different changes in the “reason” and the “reasonable person” in different social arenas. I also focused on the systems of reason in education as producing systems of inclusion/exclusion. My concern with knowledge also leads to a scrutiny of the categories of policy studies so as not to situate educational studies within the same framework of categories and distinctions of its contemporaneity. To do so, I argued in the final sections, is to produce frameworks that can do no more than recapitulate their own systems of reference, and thus fail to provide a critical knowledge about the changes occurring.

While I realize that this argument goes against the grain of policy studies as a “useful” practice in social planning, I argued for a particular self-reflexivity in research. This reflexivity is to problematize the seductive rhetoric of change and the categories that tie past social configurations to current social conditions. My discussion deployed a particular strategy of historicizing the knowledge practices of schooling and the educational sciences. That historicizing focused on the systems of categories, distinctions, and differentiations through which educational phenomena are ordered and changed over time. The systems of ideas that order pedagogy, childhood, achievement, participation, and educational policy are social constructions and effects of power. The concepts of educational research, like our commonsense ideas of teaching, cannot be treated as if they were natural, but must be interrogated as historical monuments in social relations.

To make the categories of knowledge in evaluation as the object of scrutiny returns to a theme of this essay. The reason that orders the way in which individuals participate and act in the world is a governing practice and an effect of power. Since the 19th century, there have been relations between political rationalities, social and educational sciences, the patterns of personal decision making and “reasoning” through which individuality and “self” are constructed. It is this relation that a critical enterprise of policy studies needs to confront. Policy is part of the politics of schooling. The discourses of policy function to “act as the self of the community, to turn the techniques of governing into natural laws of the social order” (Rancière, 1995). Policy studies need to make problematic the discourses of policy. The focus on reason and knowledge entails a historical methodology that is interpretive of the historical uncertainties, ambiguities, and power effects in which schooling occurs.
Notes

As I thought about the problems of this paper, I appreciated my discussions with a number of people: Gunilla Dahlberg, Lynn Fendler, Karl Jordell, Dory Lightfoot, Lizbeth Lundahl, and Hannu Simola. I also appreciated the comments from the seminar group in education at Umeå University, the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä, and the participants at the seminar on educational research that I held at the Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket).

1 One can read AERA's journal Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis to assess this judgment. Its articles focus on instrumental arguments and tend to shy away from anything that seems social, theoretical, historical, or philosophical.

2 Another way of expressing this is that reason has a materiality as it generates the principles of action and participation.

3 I use the concept of "misrecognition," as does Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), to focus on the imposition and incultication of a logic and representations that seem to stand independent of the social world but in fact take sides in political struggles.

4 The geography of Norway, with its long, mountainous coastline, has produced a strong local system of governing that coexists with a centralized system in Oslo. This centralized/decentralized system was very different from that of its neighbor, Sweden.

5 Within new patterns of governing are two Anglo-American words—"curriculum" and "professionalism." The word "curriculum" brings into focus functions about teaching, such as concerns with local planning, organizing, managing, and evaluating school knowledge. The calls for professionalism can be understood as also related to the creation of a different occupational identity as teachers work with state mandates of goal-directed pedagogy. Again drawing on particular Anglo-American concepts of professionalism, discourses of professionalism in Sweden re-vision the work of the school to include greater teacher responsibility and flexibility in implementing goal-governed approaches of the state (see, e.g., Popkewitz, 1993b).

It is interesting to note that many Scandinavian countries have a Germanic tradition in which the word "profession" tended to be used in a general way rather than to refer to specific occupations requiring higher education and expert knowledge, such as law or medicine. Also, the strong state-centered tradition tended to tie those occupations more closely to the government. It is also important to note that hidden in discourses about profession is its relation to the state, the development of capitalism, and issues of gender (see, e.g., Popkewitz, 1993a; Popkewitz & Wacquant, 1992).

6 This poses a problem as the effort to construct inclusionary systems inserts certain universal systems of sameness into the practices. The excluded groups have to become like the "others" in order to be included. This poses important questions in contemporary political theory (see Rajchman, 1993).

7 There is little discussion in education about science as rhetoric; however, the series of science as rhetoric that is published by The University of Wisconsin Press provides strong arguments that the linguistic strategies for telling the truth are more than mere representations of knowledge (John Lyne, Donald McCloskey, & John Nelson [general editors]. Rhetoric of the Human Sciences, Madison, Wisconsin). While it would be impossible for this paper, one can examine many of the new federal research centers as re-visioning measurement systems that are to capture the new pedagogical foci. Testing appears as part of the idea to provide a more comprehensive approach to school and teaching improvement.

8 I am not arguing against certain notions, within certain historical moments, as useful to organize social purposes and goals. Rather, my purpose is to suggest that the universals are always historically formed and thus always to be treated with partial irony.

9 I recognize that there are efforts to redefine the idea of participation in education that do not have the same psychological and interactional foci as I discuss here. My focus is on the sanctioned notions of participation in the discourses that overlap policy and research communities rather than critical pedagogical traditions. The latter seeks to locate participation as related to issues of social structure but often, ironically, with naturalized notions of participation that relate to prior humanistic traditions (see, e.g., Popkewitz, 1993a; Popkewitz, Tabachnick, & Wehlage, 1982; Popkewitz & Pittman, 1986).

10 Populism has a long history in educational research and reform. Populism appears in the late 19th century and is a central element in the construction of educational discourses (see, e.g., Popkewitz, 1991; Popkewitz, Tabachnick, & Wehlage, 1982; Popkewitz & Pittman, 1986).

11 In this case, the breakdown of the Fordist compromise in postwar Europe and the United States—a compromise among workers, industrialists, and the state which produced a division of labor and mechanization in exchange for a favorable wage formula and the implementation of a state welfare system—as Fordism lost its efficiency with technologies and markets. The organization of work that we are now witnessing is in part a response to the lack of efficiency of Fordist mass production. But at a different layer, there is a range of other challenges to the mechanism of social government that emerged during these same decades from civil libertarians, feminists, radicals, socialists, sociologists, and others. These reorganized programs of government utilize and institutionalize the multitude of experts of management, family life, and lifestyle who have proliferated at the points of intersection of sociopolitical aspirations and private desires for self-advancement (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 201).

References


You have printed the following article:

The Denial of Change in Educational Change: Systems of Ideas in the Construction of National Policy and Evaluation
Thomas S. Popkewitz
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0013-189X%28200001%2F02%2929%3A1%3C17%3ADOCIE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6

This article references the following linked citations. If you are trying to access articles from an off-campus location, you may be required to first logon via your library web site to access JSTOR. Please visit your library’s website or contact a librarian to learn about options for remote access to JSTOR.

Notes

12 Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government
Nikolas Rose; Peter Miller
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1315%28199206%2943%3A2%3C173%3APPBTSP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y

References

Dewey, Vygotsky, and the Social Administration of the Individual: Constructivist Pedagogy as Systems of Ideas in Historical Spaces
Thomas S. Popkewitz
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-8312%28199824%2935%3A4%3C535%3ADVATSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P

Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government
Nikolas Rose; Peter Miller
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1315%28199206%2943%3A2%3C173%3APPBTSP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.
Creating Quasi-Markets in Education: A Review of Recent Research on Parental Choice and School Autonomy in Three Countries
Geoff Whitty
Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0091-732X%281997%2922%3C3%3ACQIEAR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B

NOTE: The reference numbering from the original has been maintained in this citation list.