Research in Educational Administration & Leadership

Volume: 8, Issue: 1 / March 2023

Education Policy Transfer and Policy Change: Examining the Case of the National Assessment and Examination Center of Georgia

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Abstract

Policy change is an integral part of the modern education policymaking process. Policy changes can be done with different tools, one of which lies in policy transfer. The cons and pros of the education policy change and transfer can be seen comprehensively in post-socialist states, as the education system changed fundamentally in line with transferring policies and its aims, content, and instruments. The article deals with the process of education policy transfer and change based on the National Assessment and Examination Center (NAEC) case of Georgia. Based on the orthodox framework proposed, elaborated with the policy change concept, the article tries to determine the links between policy change and policy transfer and to identify facilitating and hindering factors of education policy change in the case of NAEC. Results show that all hindering factors are more or less linked to Soviet Inertia and post-soviet heritage: societal fears and pressure and the supra-centralization way of policymaking slow down the path of education policy transfer. However, if political, financial, and organizational support, both from outside and inside the country, coincides, it is more likely that education policy transfer and change to be successful. The article's findings can benefit the education policy theory in terms of developing and criticising the proposed assumptions, focusing on either post-soviet education transformation or policy administration.

Article Info

Article History:
***Received**:*
August 4, 2022
Accepted:
January 7, 2023

Keywords:
Education policy transfer, successful policy transfer, education policy change, education in Georgia.

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Cite as:
Tabatadze, S., & Dundua S. (2023). Education policy transfer and policy change: examining the case of the National Assessment and Examination Center of Georgia. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership, 8*(1), 188-221. https://doi.org/10.30828/real.1156035

Introduction

In public policymaking, policy change has never been an unknown phenomenon. The same can be said about policy transfer. In the era of globalization and the spread of mass communications, transferring policies has become essential for policymaking and policy change. This practice has already been applied in the education sector. National states are still considered prominent actors in the policy change and transfer process. At the same time, the influence of international agencies and organizations, foreign consultants, and regional and local NGOs are growing in all sectors of education (see: Novoa, 2002; Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Tanaka, 2005; Beech, 2006; Forestier and Crossley, 2015, Etc). Generally, when any education policy is questioned inside the country, authorities and decision-makers look for other policies abroad to either justify the crisis or plan new reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Despite the growing academic interest, critical attitudes toward education policy transfer have been reflected. One of the best illustrations is Sadler's (1990, cited in Higginson, 1979) metaphor that education reformers look like a child running outside, cutting flowers from different bushes, putting them in a planter at home, and expecting to receive a living plant.

Assessing the cons and pros of education policy transfer can be best done by focusing on the transformation of post-socialist education. Scholars note that the collapse of the socialist bloc and the emergence

of new states on the map was followed by a desire to revise national education systems' goals, content, methods, and structures (Hanson, 1997; Birzea, 1994; Silova, 2006; 2009). Education policy transformation was not carried out similarly in all post-soviet countries. The primary path to education policy change lies mainly in policy transfer. There are two significant reasons for this. Firstly, since the goal of the states lacked an alternative to socialist education, it became necessary to draw lessons from the West (Silova and Steiner-Khamsi, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Therefore, the process can be described as transferring liberal and democratic educational values and policies: administrative and financial decentralization, competency-based curriculum, transparent assessment system, market-oriented initiatives, Etc (Elliott and Tudge, 2007; Chankseliani and Silova, 2018; Silova and Steiner-Khamsi, 2008).

Similar observations can be made about Georgia, South Caucasus's post-Soviet country. Its current parameters are US$5.015 - GDP per capita, 0.8 - Human Development Index (HDI), 36 - GINI index, and a population of less than 4 million (World Bank, 2021; Geostat.ge, 2022). After regaining independence in 1991, Georgia faced civil conflicts and still struggles with creeping occupation by Russia (Kuroptev, 2020; Tabatadze, 2022; Vermetten, 2020). However, after the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgia, having close relationships and active partnerships with NATO, signed an Association Agreement (AA) with the EU in 2016. Also, its government sent a statement to become the EU candidate state but was rejected until fulfilling recommendations provided by the EU (Gigauri, 2022; Freedom House, 2021; Khuroshvili, 2021; Machitidze and Temirov, 2020). The Georgian case of the post-soviet education transformation is noteworthy for some reasons. Firstly, before Rose Revolution, the Georgian education system was

mainly driven by Soviet Inertia (Kobakhidze, 2016), while after the post-revolution, the country's Euro-Atlantic integration was fostered. Moreover, while transforming the national education system, the role of international organizations (including WB, IMF, and OSF) is clear while examining the Georgian case. One of the most important and successful projects is linked to the establishment of a national assessment and examination center (NAEC). As a counter-reaction to the spread of corruption, this organization is seen as a successful tandem of policy change and transfer (Bakker, 2014; Gabedava, 2013; Gorgodze and Chakhaia, 2021).

Therefore, this article examines the policy change and transfer issue based on the example of NAEC. Thus, the research questions can be formulated as follows: 1. How is policy transfer linked to policy change in the case of NAEC 2. What factors facilitate and hinder education policy transfer success based on the case of NAEC?

The article is divided into four parts. Firstly, the theoretical background and research methodology are shown. Secondly, a brief overview of Georgia's post-Soviet education transformations is presented, followed by outlined discussions and results. Finally, the conclusion is made.

Theoretical and Methodological Background

Academic literature on policy transfer is fragmented and less systematic. The primary classification of scientific papers is based on whether the author uses the term "policy transfer" or replaces it with a different concept, like policy diffusion, convergence, innovation, Etc. (Dolowitz and Marsh; 1996; Dussage-Laguna, 2012). The most popular, frequently used, and cited conceptualization of policy transfer is "a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative

arrangements, institutions, Etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place." (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.344). McCann and Ward (2012) see this heuristic approach as Orthodox. We believe that this heuristic, so-called Orthodox approach to studying policy transfer should consist of three parts:

- Identification of facilitating and hindering factors (see: Walker 1969; Collier and Messick 1975; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 2000; Stone 2014, 2010, 2016; Evans 2009);
- The process-oriented research questions: why, from where, what, to what extent, to what degree, by whom is transferred (see: Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 2000, 2012; Evans 2004; Benson and Jordan 2011; 2012; Stone 2004, 2010, 2012);
- The influence of causes and processes on its outcomes should be studied in detail that is linked to the success and failure of its results (see: Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; James and Lodge 2003; McConnel 2010; Marsh and McConnel; 2012; Fawcett and Marsh 2012).

Using the social constructivist perspective, McCann and Ward (2012) criticized the heuristic approach. The authors point out that the heuristic (orthodox model) shares only the positivist or realist ontological principles. Indeed, the concept of policy transfer is getting more popular in non-political science literature. Later, Dolowitz and Marsh (2012) answered most of the critics and pointed out that they are against the social constructivist approach. However, their paper does not formulate the future directions of studying policy transfer. We believe the orthodox frame of policy transfer should be understood as a three-part model: causes, process, and outcomes. Relying on

different authors, we presented the figure that presents our understanding of the orthodox frame of policy transfer (see figure 1).

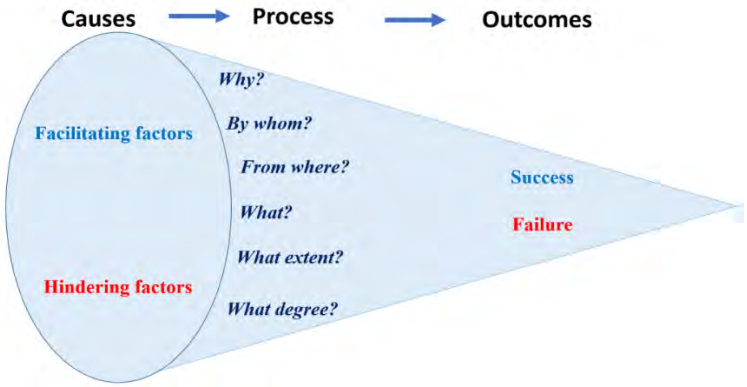


Figure 1.

Orthodox framework for studying policy transfer

Source: own elaboration. Rely on Dolowitz (2003); Dolowitz and Medearis (2009); Benson and Jordan (2012); Fawcett and Marsh (2012); Marsh and Evans (2012); Pojani (2020).

Other scholars believe that policy transfer cannot provide independent theoretical explanations and should be studied with different frames (e.g., Wolman, 1992, James and Lodge, 2003, Evans, 2009a). For instance, with policy development process (Wolman 1992; Evans 2004, 2009a, 2009b); rational choice model (Wolman 1992); incrementalism (Patel 2009); social constructivism (McCann and Ward, 2012); new institutional approach (James and Lodge 2003); policy change (Wolman 1992; Evans and Davis 1991; Evans 2009b); multiple Stream Approach and garbage can model (Wolman 1992; Cairney, 2009, Stone, 2012), advocacy coalition approach (James and Lodge 2003); policy networks, and epistemic communities (Evans and Davis 1991; Evans 2009; Stone 2012).

The explanation developed by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000) understanding allows us to differentiate policy transfer from policy diffusion or convergence concepts, sometimes accidental processes that occur more suddenly and rapidly. Based on this definition, policy transfer cannot be seen as accidental or unintentional, whether voluntary or not, it aims to provide (at least small-scale) changing current policy. As Capano and Howlett (2009, p.3) note "all policy is policy change". However, we rely on the classic definition of policy change that refers to incrimental shifts in existing structures, or new and innovative policies (Bennet and Howlett, 1992).

Hence, we assume that policy transfer can be seen and studied as a tool and way of policy change. Thus, policy change can be put on the policy agenda for different reasons. One of the ways and tools to make it lies in the policy transfer, which is a result-oriented, not accidental, process that aims to change (at least gradually) some policies. Hence, doing a policy transfer changes the policy.

Besides defining the concept of policy transfer and studying it with the different frameworks (like policy change), one of the crucial and underdeveloped issues of the academic literature deals with determining the success and failure of policy transfer. In terms of discussing the issue, Harold Wolman is a pioneer. The author focuses on two main criteria for a successful policy transfer: adopting the policy into the existing institution design and continuous political support. Wolman also stresses the importance of the following factors: public opinion, political culture, and social-economic structure (Wolman, 1992). In terms of formulating a relatively more academic typology, Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) identify three main types of unsuccessful policy transfer: imperfect, uninformed, and incomplete. Policy transfer is uninformed when decision-makers have insufficient

information about the nature of transferring policies and their functioning, and incomplete policy transfer is linked to the social, economic, political, and ideological contextual differences between lending and borrowing jurisdictions (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). Therefore, imperfection of policy transfer is related to the loss of the policy's fundamental element(s) that makes it successful.

Interestingly, all types are somehow related to the concept and idea of bounded rationality; when a policy transfer fails, it is ultimately explained by the fact that decision-makers make mistakes or do not have complete information about what and how to transfer. However, we believe the decision-makers role is excessive as the importance of structural and institutional factors is neglected. The typology of Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) is strongly criticized by James and Lodge (2003). They believe that, in practice, it is difficult to determine and measure the success or failure of policy transfer.

In response to this critique, the works of Marsh and McConnell (2010) and McConnell (2010), to some extent, attempt to formulate a more sophisticated typology. They rely on Bowens, Hart, and Peter's (2001) classifications of programmatic and political success and add to it the category of process success. Thus, Marsh and McConnell (2010) formulated the types of policy transfer successes and their measurement indicators (see table 1). Although this typology is more operationalized than the previous one, several issues remain unclear. For instance, does this classification refer only to the success or failure of policy transfer or any general policy process? It seems there is no nuanced feature of policy transfer.

Table 1. *Successful policy transfer: types and measurements*

	Type of success	Indicators
1	Programmatic	measurable analysis of the performance of the states, goals, objectives, the efficient use of resources, and results obtained
2	Process	strict adherence to the legislative framework, frequency of discussions, debates, and hearings, number of actors involved, and interest of unofficial actors.
3	Political	results of elections and public opinion polls

Source: Marsh and McConnell, adapted version.

A review of the academic literature has shown that despite the issue's importance, there is still no consensus on how to study the success or failure of policy transfer. Therefore, for a comprehensive study, the success and failure of policy transfer should be linked to the critical questions: who, when, where, in what form, to what degree, why, and how transfers. (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, 2000). In this article, we rely on Marsh and McConnel's (2010) typology but try to make links with the orthodox framework.

Due to the article's aims, we used qualitative research methods: case studies and in-depth interviews. NAEC, with its policies, are descriptive and instrumental types of case study. Also, using a targeted sampling method, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with three representatives of the top management Ministry of Education (MoE) of Georgia, five representatives of the management of NAEC, 5 Georgian experts in the field of education, and two foreign consultants working with NAEC. To avoid judging the book by its cover, we interviewed all stakeholders involved in the NAEC design, administration, and policy evaluation. In-depth interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online from

November 2021-April 2022. Research ethics and principles, confidentiality and privacy, dignity, and intellectual property were protected. No conflicts of interest were declared, and all respondents were aware of being part of the survey by giving verbal informed consent.

The interview guide consists of five main parts: what happened before NAEC: the situation overview(i), how and why policy changed (ii), how NAEC was established and practices of lesson-drawing and transfer (iii), assessing the results of NAEC and its policies (iv); evaluate success and failures of policy transfer (v). The interview coding process was conducted by asking eight main questions:

1. Do respondents remember the period before NAEC? If so, how?

2. Do respondents remember when the idea of NAEC was introduced? If so, how is it explained and refined?

3. Do they have a positive or negative stance on NAEC and why? If positive/negative stances are outlined, why?

4. How the process of establishing NAEC was going on? By whom?

5. How the initial ideas of NAEC and its policies occurred? By whom?

6. Was there any example of lesson drawing? If so, how and by whom?

7. How do respondents assess the results of NAEC and its policies? Why?

8. How do respondents assess the success and failures of NAEC and its Policy transfer? Why?

Respondents' names are coded as R1, R2 … R15 during the research and reporting to ensure their confidentiality.

Education transformation in Georgia: NAEC in focus

As a post-Soviet state, it is not surprising that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and regaining independence, due to social and economic problems and increased emigration, education became one of the most neglected public sectors in the 1990s, teachers and professors received almost no salaries public spending on education has dramatically declined in Georgia (Chankseliani, 2013; Janashia, 2016; Orkodashvili, 2010; Kitiashvili and Chkuaseli, 2013). However, at that time, international donor organizations (WB, IMF, OSF) prioritized to change education system and policy of Georgia. Initially, WB became the key player in transforming and strengthening the general education system in Georgia. The WB's project, approved by the Ministries of Education and Finance of Georgia, was the highest loan since regaining its independence. One of the components of the project dealt with establishing a transparent and standardized assessment system.

Due to social-economic problems and increased emigration caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, education became one of the most neglected public sectors in Georgia in the 1990s. Teachers and professors received almost no salaries; public spending on education has dramatically declined in Georgia (Chankseliani, 2013; Janashia, 2016; Orkodashvili, 2010; Kitiashvili and Chkuaseli, 2013). However, at that time, international donor organizations (WB, IMF, OSF) prioritized changing Georgia's education system and policy. Initially,

WB became the key player in transforming and strengthening the general education system in Georgia. The WB's project, approved by the Ministries of Education and Finance of Georgia, was the highest loan since regaining its independence. One of the components of the project dealt with establishing a transparent and standardized examination model to reduce the level of corruption that was a massive problem in Georgia (Temple, 2006). In 2002, the National Examination and Assessment Center (NAEC) was established (Bakker, 2014; Chankseliani, Gorgodze, Janashia and Kurabayev, 2020; Gorgodze and Chakhaia, 2021).

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, policies started to shake. Although the legacy of the Rose Revolution is differently assessed (Cheterian, 2008; Dobbins, 2013; Jones, 2012; Papava, 2006; Wheatley, 2017), this period is characterized by large-scale political changes, including in the education sphere. It is described as turning to the path of Westernization and modernization as all public institutions declared to foster Euro-Atlantic integration (Coene, 2016; Dundua, Karaia and Abashidze, 2017; Fairbanks, 2004; Tabatadze, 2019).

In terms of NAEC, the main change was that it became the legal entity of MoE, not an independent institution as the WB's project planned it. Also, the first national-wide project of NAEC was implemented: Unified National Examinations (UNEs) were introduced. It is an ongoing state-centralized model when NAEC (as a state legal entity) plans, conducts, and assesses the results of applicants who want to enroll at higher education institutions. So, the role of universities is totally neglected, and they receive the lists of people who will be their first-year students.

Although NAEC still plays a vital role in the education system of Georgia, academic literature lacks papers relating to this institution or

its policies. The academic literature focuses on UNEs, SGEs, and their societal effects. UNEs are portrayed as a successful anti-corruption policy that strengthens the ideas of equal opportunities and meritocracy (Chakhaia, 2018; Gabedava, 2013; World Bank; 2012). However, others point out that UNEs has also contributed to strengthening the private tutoring system and increased the inequality between entrants from urban and rural backgrounds (e.g., Bregvadze, 2012; Chankseliani, 2013, Gorgodze and Chakhaia, 2021, Kobakhidze, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Reviewed academic literature can be divided into three parts: the orthodox framework of policy transfer, the interrelationship between policy transfer and policy change, and determining the success/failure of policy transfer. The section on the study results is in line with these parts.

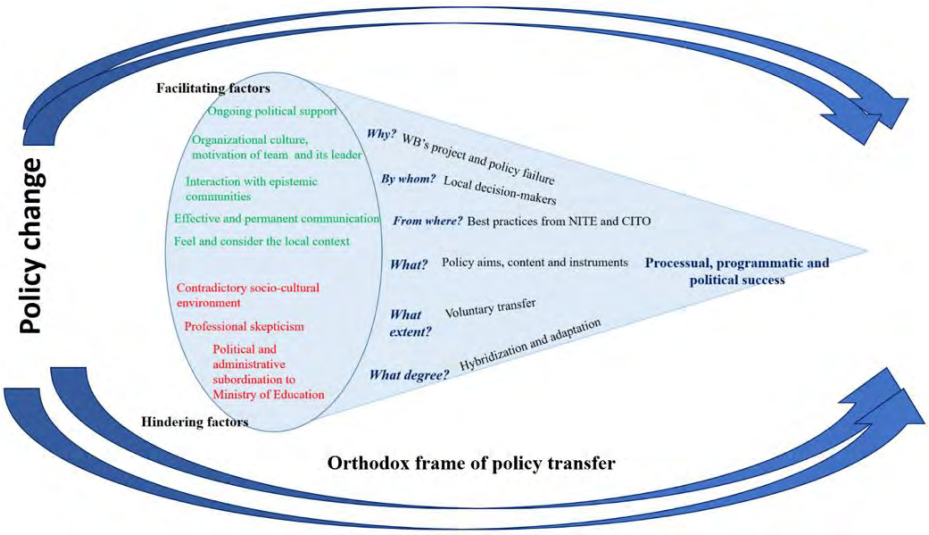
The policy change and transfer of NAEC are rooted in WB's project (the highest loan in education since regaining independence), which started in 1999. WB and MoE of Georgia initially agreed that at examination and assessment, policy change should be started as there were almost no essential data in most sub-fields of general education. Respondent worked as a foreign consultant in the project and recalls that WB instructed them to describe and analyze the current situation and prioritize ways to change the existing assessment and exam policy. Then, the competition was announced to select a thematic group of experts from different study disciplines (math, chemistry, Etc.) to form a temporary contract with them: "Due to the lack of experience, there was almost no alternative, but lesson-drawing and policy transfer" (R4). Project participants were trained via seminars and workshops

that covered general and particular issues, focusing on general theory tests, test implementation at the national level, Etc. Mainly, foreign experts and consultants arrived in Georgia and conducted these on-site training and seminars. At the same time, project members went to several international conferences and study tours. For instance, the first took place in 1998 in CITO, Netherlands.

The first policy draft introduced UNEs, state-centralized entrance examinations, and the submission of universities' lists to the universities by NAEC. UNEs, firstly conducted in 2005, consisted of General Ability Tests. It was a novelty, and respondents note that GAT arose after lesson drawing from international conferences, "Since everything was changing at a large scale, we were afraid to announce such experiments" (R7). From in-depth interviews, we can assume that the Georgian version of GAT is a hybrid that consists of two major parts: verbal and mathematical. "The first is almost identical to the Israeli version, while the second looks similar to the American SAT" (R5). Respondents recall that after participating in the study tour in Sweden, the item of information sufficiency in GAT was added. Therefore, we can conclude that GAT is an example of policy transfer as it is a result-oriented and purposeful action that started with inspiration and ended with some hybridization. Respondents note that due to cultural sensitivity, items in GAT were not translated, and all of them were based on the local social environment. Noteworthy, "cultural similarity" was named among the reasons why Israel was selected for the verbal part of GAT and not, for example, the USA. Indeed, unlike foreign models, the Georgian version of GAT had "unprecedentedly high transparency, which was also the call of the then Minister of Education of Georgia (R2).

In this article, we rely on the definition of policy transfer as bounded rational action(s) when global, national, or local policies are transferred to other jurisdictions on any level of government. At the same time, as mentioned above, policy transfer should be studied in the context of policy change. Indeed, the case of NAEC demonstrates that policy transfer was undergone within the policy change. When the necessity of policy change was put on the policy agenda (When both W.B. and local decision-makers put the problem on the policy cycle), one of the solutions and ways was to make policy transfer. The aims, content, and instruments of establishing an assessment and examination center, and implementing state-centralized examination, GAT, and other policies are transferred voluntarily from different jurisdictions. Indeed, the respondent notes: "we started to look for foreign analogs that would be the fastest, cheapest, and fairest way" (R10). For a better understanding, see figure 2.

Figure 2 *Orthodox Frame of Policy Transfer*



Source: own elaboration

Interestingly, different authors claim that the education policy transfer of NAEC was successful for all stakeholders: lenders and receivers, implementers and beneficiaries (Bakker, 2014; Charekishvili, 2015, Chakhaia and Gorgodze, 2021, Gabedava, 2013). Academic Literature suggests that the most effective and well-known typology to determine the success of policy transfer is developed by McConell and Marsh (2010). NAEC's policies are outlined to be successful in policy change and transfer in all criteria of the given classification. As Table 2 presents, NAEC and its policies were successful regarding programmatic, process, and political types.

Table 2.

Successful policy transfer: the case of NAEC

N	Type of success	Indicators	**Evaluation done by sources:** NAEC (2019); Transparency International Georgia, (2005; 2006); World Bank (2012).
1	Programmatic	measurable analysis of the performance of the states, goals, objectives, the efficient use of resources, and results obtained	• The main goal and objectives were to fight against education corruption and achieve equal and fair conditions for university entrance exams; • The level of corruption declined; • The number of entrants from lower SES was doubled; • The free and equal conditions were established and still ongoing;
2	Process	strict adherence to the legislative framework, frequency of discussions, debates, and hearings, number of actors involved, and interest of unofficial actors.	• NAEC was introduced as a legal entity without any resistance; • UNEs were implemented initially in 2005; • MoE, NAEC, professional communities, schools, and universities were involved; • All legal procedures were followed, and either official or unofficial actors outlined no essential resistance;

3	Political	results of elections and public opinion polls	• Electoral support of the government was increased; • Public polls showed NAEC was the most significant success of education reform;

However, it is still unclear which factors facilitated and hindered education policy transfer success in the case of NAEC. We can identify five possible facilitating factors based on the in-depth interviews and documents studied. These are ongoing and strong political support, organizational culture, high motivation and competence of the team and its leader, interaction with foreign epistemic communities, effective and permanent communication inside and outside the country, and effectively considering the local context.

We can assume that education policy transfer cannot be successful without ongoing and robust political support. As already mentioned, in 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia shifted the policies profoundly toward westernization and modernization. At that time, NAEC was already introduced, but policies had not been implemented yet. A key factor facilitating NAEC's policy transfer success was ongoing political support for pre-and post-revolutionary governments and their MoEs. In the first case, it was more personal: pre-revolutionary Minister of Education Kartozia supported the initiative of the centralized and anti-corrupted system of exams, was interested, and often visited the NAEC's team and stressed the need for policy change at government meetings. However, the pace of progress was still slow as the ruling team aimed at maintaining the status quo, mainly in all policy spheres. After the Rose Revolution, political support continued and was greatly strengthened by a new government. Foreign experts and NAEC managers recall that financial and administrative support was unprecedentedly high, and the whole bureaucracy and policy were fully mobilized to safely conduct the UNEs in 2005 (R9, R11, R5). Post-

revolutionary minister Alexander Lomaia also often visited the team of NAEC to find out the processes gone and to stress the full support from the newly elected president of Georgia (R3, R6). Therefore, continued political support helped NAEC establish and implement its projects.

Another essential factor that helped NAEC's policy transfer to be successful is linked to organizational culture, high motivation, and competence of the team and its leader. Based on the interviews, foreign consultants noted that the NAEC team was highly qualified and motivated for new knowledge and experience (R2, R3). Interestingly, training and seminars were attended by members of all expert groups from NAEC, who then shared experiences with colleagues. Also, staff returning from study tours conducted seminars and workshops with local experts. The role of the team leader, Maia Miminoshvili, should be mentioned: "a professional, highly qualified, risk-taking and maneuverable manager" who participated in the process of sorting the necessary inventory and packing it in boxes while preparing for UNEs, also attended exams in every examination center, supported local experts without exception (R2, R8). Despite the change of MoE administration, she managed to stay at the top of NAEC for many years. Synthesis of high motivation and competence of the team and its leadership provided to maintain NAEC's organizational culture: Family and friendly environment, which had a robust system of norms about what the best practices are" (R4). Therefore, it has become the organization that "learned itself" (R3).

High motivation of local decision-makers and a small amount of luck helped NAEC to interact with foreign epistemic communities, "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant

Knowledge within that domain or issue-area" (Haas, 1992, p.46). The NAEC's decision-makers stress that they were fortunate to have S. Baker, WB project consultant and later advisor of NAEC. Using his contacts, NAEC started contacting ETS, PEARSON, CITO, NITE, Cambridge Assessment, and other education policy-relevant organizations and their expert teams. According to local decision-makers, they were lucky because Baker "allowed us to learn from different experiences" (R1). Interestingly, after the WB project, NAEC's managers contacted these organizations and hired consultants to assist and consult, as "we first look for an experience abroad, when the problem or the will of policy change occur" (R3). Therefore, closed relationships and interaction with foreign epistemic communities helped NAEC with further policy transfer, like GAT exams.

Interaction with foreign epistemic communities and organizational clan culture somehow fostered effective and permanent communication inside and outside the country. NAEC management with the MoE of Georgia held numerous meetings with stakeholders (school principals, teachers, university staff, and supervisors) throughout the year prior to the UNEs. A similar practice had continued since 2005, when the NAEC's managers, along with members of the subject-based expert group, held meetings in almost all urban centers of Georgia and held open days to increase its reputation and legitimize policy change by making things transparent. A good example of indirect communication is that all UNE tests with answers were published on the official website (R5). At the same time, communication outside the country has reached a new level of development, including organizing international meetings and conferences, making new memorandums with different international organizations, Etc (R13). Thus, the high quality and level of

communication inside Georgia facilitated the more or less easy adaptation of large-scale policy change. In contrast, effective communication with foreign actors helped NAEC create new cooperations and internal legitimacy.

Last but not least no matter how large-scale the policy change is, one of the essential factors for education policy transfer success lies in effectively considering the local context. From this point of view, work done by NAEC was not duplicating foreign experience but was based on existing realities: "All the changes were research and evidence-based (R3). What do we mean under the "local context"? Both social and political as well as cultural factors. We can present some examples:

- During the UNEs in 2005, the idea articulated that cameras should be installed in the examination centers, while outside, the entrants' parents would be able to see how the process was going. Although foreign consultants were surprised by the news, they realized that the idea of cameras (implemented in practice successfully) was driven by a transparent anti-corruption policy narrative (R6).
- Despite having an item of synonyms-antonyms in the Israeli model, decision-makers of NAEC decided not to transfer it, as in the Georgian language, no frequency dictionary made it harder to make such types of tests in GAT (R2).
- MoE of Georgia considered that CAT exams should be held in examination centers of urban areas; however, managers of NAEC disagreed as they believed it would be challenging for every school student to take exams very far from home (R1). Taking into account Georgia's socio-economic situation and geographic characteristics, NAEC refused to do so and decided

> to make a logistically more complicated but more fair decision to hold exams in every school (more than 2500) in Georgia.

However, we can outline three main factors that hindered the education policy transfer in the case of NAEC. Despite continued political support, a fundamental policy change in the assessment and exam sector did not reveal without resistance. The first such resistance turned out with the case of GAT when public myths (that GAT is against national and cultural heritage and traditions) were created and articulated, raising societal fears about the new examination model and its possible results. However, it should be noted that despite strong political, financial and administrative support from the post-revolutionary government, the staff of NAEC did not feel fully protected from public groups. In Georgia, this period is still the beginning of the social transformation, often characterized by uncertainty and contradiction. Respondents recall cases: "I remember that when we went to the pilots from the capital to the regions, we hid the tests under a jacket so that no one would take them away" (R9); "We slept with the memory cards on which the test database was placed (R2). Therefore, in the first years of NAEC, there was a risk that someone should have an intent to get tests and answers, and this condition would surely hinder the policy change, transfer, and implementation. Therefore, the first factor is linked to a contradictory socio-cultural environment.

Logically, any large-scale policy change that promoted social fears and public myths led to skepticism in professional circles. In this case, UNEs affected secondary schools and universities involved in the corruption schemes (R10, R11). Professional skepticism is evident in the meetings organized by members of NAEC with representatives of schools and universities and education experts. Instead of relevant and

result-oriented discussions, accusations were often heard at these meetings: "Many thought that with this model, corruption would remain, but it would pass into the hands of the government" (R3). Interestingly, respondents recall that some colleagues from MoE of Georgia and its entities felt the reform and change would be doomed and somewhat hopeless (R4, R12, R14). This issue was the most frequently asked of NAEC decision-makers to emphasize that policy worked abroad could not be successful for Georgian society and the political system. We can conclude that in such cases, professional skepticism tries to be based on the view that specific policies are copied from elsewhere.

Another hindering factor for successful policy transfer and change is linked to political and administrative subordination to the Ministry of Education of Georgia. Raising societal fears and public myths, on the one hand, and professional skepticism, on the other, was coupled with Georgia's centralized public governance system. As already mentioned, contrary to the original version of the WB project, NAEC has become a legal entity of public law (LEPL) of MoE. The reasons can be simplifying the coordination of educational institutions and processes and "maintaining political leverage" (R1). In the policy transfer process, NAEC's leadership agreed with MoE on all crucial decisions as NAEC had an executing, not constantly policy formulating, function. The acceleration of conducting UNEs in 2005 instead of 2007 can be an excellent example of existing standing administrative relationships.

Moreover, despite the resistance of the NAEC's team, in 2009, at the request of the Minister of Education, they were instructed to design and implement school leaving exams within only ten months. Also, due to logistic reasons and political fears, the NAEC team was asked

to increase the number of test versions and decrease the number of questions while implementing UNEs in 2005. More specifically, the MoE of Georgia claimed that a confused society could not understand if the maximum score at GAT would be 80 instead of 100, as a hundred is easy to calculate. One respondent recalls that it was the first, and not the last, time when she saw a fundamental clash between the system's interest and content. Indeed, despite agreed conditions with foreign consultants, NAEC had to make changes as soon as possible (R15). We can assume that, despite mentioned hindering factors, facilitating ones are robust enough to successfully make education policy change and transfer.

Conclusions

The article aimed to examine the policy change and transfer issue based on the example of NAEC. Several findings can be outlined based on the explained methodology and proposed approach. First, to study education policy transfer comprehensively, it can be studied in the context of policy change. The first RQ of the article deals with the linkage between policy change and policy transfer in the case of NAEC. The case of NAEC and its policies have shown that policy transfer can be studied with the policy change, and at the same time, the orthodox framework (see figure N1 and N2) should be in focus. It allows us to examine how causes, processes, and results can correspond to each other and the general shifts of policy change. Secondly, assessing the success or failure of education policy transfer and change can be done with Marsh and McConnell's (2010) typology. NAEC is a successful policy transfer and change in post-socialist Georgia. From this point of view, some hindering and facilitating factors are outlined that answers the second RQ. We can conclude that all hindering factors are more or less linked to Soviet Inertia and post-

soviet heritage. Societal fears and pressure about policy change, subordination to the MoE of Georgia, and supra-centralization way of policy-making slowed the policy transfer and change path. However, results suggest that the process can be successful if some facilitating factors come together. In NAEC's case, external and internal support and motivation were in place. All stakeholders, government(s), World Bank, foreign consultants, epistemic communities, and NAEC's team were self-motivated and mostly in line with each step.

These conclusions can merit the theory of education policy transfer and change, as it proposes some assumptions about why and how education policy transfer succeeds or fails. Also, these factors can be examined in other post-socialist countries, where education policy transfer and change have occurred.

Furthermore, the results of this work can be valuable in three terms. Firstly, it tries to demonstrate that studying education policy transfer cannot be done without examining the context and period, focusing on policy change. Secondly, it proposes the framework in which the heuristic approach (presented as a three-part model: causes, process, and outcomes) is studied based on assessing facilitating/hindering factors, the actual process, and success indicators of NAEC's policy change and policy transfer. Last but not least, the article's findings can be used with other scholars, focusing on either post-soviet education transformation or policy administration to develop and criticize the proposed assumptions.

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