

Dynamics in Basic Education Politics in Nordic Countries (DYNO)

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48 months

The research project intends to reconstruct a comparative view of basic education politics in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Our theoretical and methodological approach will seriously take up the challenge of unravelling the complexity, contingency and trans-nationality that characterise the educational systems of Nordic societies. Our main hypothesis is that the dynamics in the basic education system in each country are relative, but reflect the intertwinement of the dynamics from at least four focal perspectives: education policy-making and governance, family educational strategies and classroom cultures. If successful, this research project will open up various new horizons and will have an impact not only on education research but also on other fields of comparative historical sociology and politics. Pragmatically, it will open up avenues for both educational development and education consultancy and export.

1. Background

Economists and sociologists increasingly realise that education has moved from the periphery to the core in the institutional arrangements of contemporary society and is becoming a constitutive element of social systems. This massive increase in political importance has not been accompanied by the development of a theoretical toolbox for educational research, however, particularly in comparative education. It is widely accepted that comparative education as a field of study still suffers from serious *under-theorisation and methodological deficits*. No wonder it is sharply divided. Although most scholars disregard the shortfalls and continue with their studies, some colleagues question the legitimacy of the whole industry. There is no consensus on the very basis of comparison in the field.¹

Four main problems have arisen. First, there is *a lack of theoretical ambitiousness* in the field of comparative education. This is one reason why politically motivated investigations such as OECD country reviews and assessment studies are determining the state of the art. The increasingly sophisticated collection of apparently useful data has taken the place of ontological and epistemological interpretation. In standard research it is still typical to construct arguments based on interpretations of the relatively stable characteristics of different subjects rather than analysing the attributes of relations.²

Second, the focus of comparative studies is more often than not on *end products rather than processes*. Technically well executed, these studies undoubtedly amass interesting information on different educational systems, and the resulting database will facilitate further sophisticated and fruitful analysis. The ranking and benchmarking indicators and their combinations might indeed tell us something essential about ‘how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society’, as stated in the well-known PISA studies. This information does not necessarily further understanding of the development and dynamics of a specific educational system, however.³

¹ Kauko, Simola, Varjo & Kalalahti 2012; Simola 2009; Dale 2009; Epstein 2008; Marginson & Mollis 2001;; Broadfoot 2003; Cowen 2009; Schriewer 2000; 2006

² Emirbayer 1997; Biesta 2010

³ Mulford 2002; Goldstein 2004

Third, although the *problem of complexity* is widely accepted on the general level, it appears seldom to reach empirical studies. Despite the heavy criticism in theoretical discussions, the vast majority of standard approaches still advocate simple explanatory models such as taxonomies, stage heuristics, the interest approach and periodization. They constitute a perspective within which phenomena can be explained clearly and understood with certainty, and human endeavours (such as policymaking) can proceed in a straightforward manner, and be continuously controlled, evaluated and/or improved.⁴

Finally and paradoxically enough, it is a kind of *intellectual nationalism* that prevents the conceptualisation and understanding of the relation between globalisation and nation states. ‘Hyperglobalism’ has lost its position, and the role of national states has been reconsidered. Methodological nationalism, methodological ‘statism’ and methodological ‘educationism’ make it difficult to go beyond the ‘unbearable narrowness of the national view’ in understanding how the national is constituted by its interconnections, meetings and crossings with the trans-national.⁵

Therefore, the main point in this research is that in order to reach the level of political importance, comparative education needs *a strong and ambitious theory-based framework* with the potential to incorporate socio-historical complexity, relationality and contingency of the research subject under examination. Without a strong theory-driven approach it is hard to go beyond merely listing the similarities and differences that facilitate the rankings but blur the processes.

2. Objectives

My thesis is that in order to progress beyond the state of the art and arrive at a comparative understanding of educational systems, we must focus on *dynamics* with a view to grasping the fluid and mobile nature of the subject of study. It is curious that, although on the conceptual level the dynamics of a system are constantly referred to as being among its key attributes, there has been little progress on the analytical level since the seminal work of Pitirim Sorokin in the 1950s.⁶ With the theoretical concept of dynamics we aim to resuscitate and open up to scrutiny a specific social field of education through analysing the relations between the main actors and institutions, and the essential discursive formations and practices. Given its connection with relations and movement, the concept of dynamics does not reduce a mobile and fluid subject of study to a stagnant and inanimate object. Here, both systems theories and neo-institutionalism offer the most coherent basis for progress⁷.

Second, we must grasp the nettle of *complexity and contingency* in late-modern societies: we should “throw fully into relief the complexity” and “rely on theoretical orientations and conceptual systems that are capable of incorporating the considerable array of methodological points of view and analytical perspectives”⁸. Through emphasising both the insecurity and openness of the horizon of expectations and the relative freedom of more or less conscious actors, the approach offers a reasonable solution to the perpetual but fruitless juxtaposition of the historical roles of actors, institutions and structures. Within the dimensions of time (historical continuation), space (local, national, regional and global) and level (micro/actors, meso/institutions and macro/structures) we will develop techniques to model dynamics in a new way that will include both causal-linear and relativistic relations, and will make comparison possible. Relational sociology, complexity theories and computational methods in particular constitute a solid basis for carrying out this task⁹.

⁴ Nóvoa et al. 2003; Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier 1993; Sewell 1996; Phillips & Ochs 2003; Scheurich 1997; Dahler-Larsen 2012

⁵ Dale 2009; Kettunen 2011; Conrad 2006; Dale 2009; Werner & Zimmermann 2006; Held et al 2003; Nóvoa & Lawn 2002

⁶ Sorokin 2010 [1957]; Biesta & Osberg 2010; Prigogine 1997; Emirbayer 1997

⁷ Luhmann & Schorr 2000; Meyer & Boli 2009

⁸ Schriewer 2000, 328

⁹ Osberg & Biesta 2010; Medd 2002; Emirbayer 1997

Third and finally, a socio-historical analysis of the *trans-national and the inter-crossing* from the perspective of political history is needed in order to shed light on the essential relationships between the global, the regional, the national and the local, and thereby gain a comparative understanding and, even more importantly, a mutual exchange of experiences. It is not enough in this late-modern world (if ever) to study dependence and interaction among national states, or the border-crossing transfer of ideas and concepts. We should be more interested in the webs of structural power operating throughout the global system rather than in the comparative analysis of discrete parts of it, bounded by territorial frontiers that have been auspiciously opened up in comparative political history¹⁰.

Comparative Analytics of Dynamics in Education Politics (CADEP) is a fresh theoretical framework based on more than a decade of empirical research work in my research unit New Politics, Governance and Interaction in Education (KUPOLI). Just recently and tentatively we have been able to verify four constitutive dynamics that make the Finnish educational success story understandable¹¹. In order to do this we have developed the analytics of dynamics on four focal levels: *policy-making and governance, family educational strategies and classroom cultures*. All this has been done in the framework of four major comparative research projects. My claim is that only through dynamics and its theoretical application are we able to create a socio-historically and relationally sensitive way of comparing.

The main and specific research questions and the corresponding objectives are formulated below (Table 1).

Table 1: The research questions with the corresponding objectives

Main Research Question: How can we arrive at a comparative understanding of basic education policy in the Nordic countries while keeping the subject of study mobile and fluid and at the same time allowing comparison with other policy fields?	
Main Research Objective: To develop and validate an approach focusing on dynamics in policy-making and governance, family educational strategies and classroom cultures, reconstructed by relations between policy threads, actors and institutions in an empirical comparative study focusing on the Nordic countries	
Research Questions	Research Goals
Q1: How can we account for the fact that an education policy field is constructed of <i>power relations</i> and is in <i>constant motion</i> ?	O1: To develop a <i>relational</i> approach based on <i>dynamics</i> in education politics
Q2: How can we take into consideration the specific importance and roles of the <i>context, structure, institutions and agency</i> ?	O2: To develop a post-linear approach based on <i>complexity and contingency</i> in education politics
Q3: How can we take into consideration the specific relations between the <i>global, the regional, the national and the local</i> ?	O3: To develop a <i>socio-historical</i> approach based on <i>trans-nationality</i> in education politics
Q4: How are the different cases to be <i>compared</i> in terms of dynamics in education politics?	O4: To develop analytical modelling including <i>both causal-linear and relativistic relations</i> of the research subject

¹⁰ Strange 1997; Condar 2006; Kettunen 2006; Siegrist 2006; Werner & Zimmermann 2006; Nóvoa & Lawn 2002; Altbach 2004

¹¹ Simola et al 2009; 2011b; 2013; forthcoming; Simola & Rinne 2011; Kauko et al 2012a; b

Why focus the comparison of political dynamics on Nordic basic education? Since WW2 the ‘Nordic comprehensive school model’ has become an internationally interesting project in education policy. A comprehensive school system in Nordic terms means a unified, non-streamed system in which all pupils, regardless of academic and economic background and resources, are enrolled in the same age-based educational institution. The system covers the primary and lower-secondary levels (1–6/7 and 7–9/10) in all five countries. Educational progressivism in the form of pedagogical practices that pay attention to students’ engagement and activities has also played an important role within the Nordic model.¹²

The restructuring of educational systems that has been going on since the 1990s has shattered the cohesion of the Nordic model. ‘Free school choice’ has been a core element in the global market-liberalist restructuring of public education. This has quite dramatically re-shaped the Nordic comprehensive model in particular, according to which public schools take their students mainly from strictly delineated local catchment areas and the role of the private sector is minor. New ways of working based on the single individual rather than the class have appeared during the last two decades. It seems as if traditional classroom teaching is now being challenged by new ways of organising school work focusing on work plans and project work, for example.¹³

The restructuring of educational systems is not only changing their structure, it is also reframing the meaning and content of schooling. The idea of the educated citizen seems to have been replaced by the separated individual responsible for his/her own life.¹⁴ Individualisation has been a theme for a long time in all Nordic countries. Neo-liberal educational policy—with the individual self-reliant learner at the centre—together with social constructivist learning theories, seem, however, to be the main forces for individualised teaching and learning today. The language of teaching has been replaced with a language of learning, together with an emphasis on individuals as responsible for themselves and their own learning. This change of meaning regarding the purpose of school and the relation between society and the individual constitutes the reframing of the meaning of individualisation. Even if there are many similarities between the countries in how individualisation is reframed, there are also interesting differences that raise some questions. The transformation of school practices moves at different paces as well as in different directions in the different countries. Depending on the national contexts and histories, including the school traditions, strategies for coping with the late-modern conditions will differ. The question is not whether or not there will be individualisation in pedagogical practices, it rather concerns what form it will take.¹⁵

Since the late 1980s school-choice policies known as ‘free school choice’ or ‘parental choice’ have extended to basic schooling in the Nordic countries, with the exception of Denmark where private schools have traditionally offered an alternative to comprehensive school. This has quite dramatically re-shaped the so-called comprehensive model, according to which public schools take their students mainly from strictly delineated local catchment areas. The radical implementation of a ‘free schools’ policy that began in the early 1990s has created ‘quasi-markets’ in Swedish basic education, although Finland, Norway and Iceland have been more cautious. Twelve per cent of Swedish comprehensive-school students attend free private schools, but in some cities the proportion is above 30 per cent. The share of private schools in Sweden nowadays is about the same as in Denmark.

There is a versatile and growing body of research on the features and effects of choice policies, and on-going discussion and debate about the methodology used and the findings produced in the field of the sociology of education. Many researchers heed the warnings that ‘parental choice’ may be a

¹² Klette et al 2006

¹³ Klette et al 2006

¹⁴ see, e.g.; Klette et al 2002; Klette et al, 2000

¹⁵ Klette et al 2006

key issue in future policies for comprehensive education. A serious question to address is whether the ideal of common and shared schools for all citizens will survive or be eroded by a reality in which the offspring of the haves and the have-nots attend separate schools.¹⁶

3. Methods, materials and ethical issues

Comparative Analytics of Dynamics in Education Politics (CADEP) concludes a decade-long process of intensive empirical research on policy, politics and governance in education. The theoretical framework and models for the comparative study of educational systems outlined here are based on extensive multifarious empirical data and the findings, for which the PI was responsible. Thus far CADEP has been tested in the Finnish and Chilean contexts¹⁷.

I propose that the key to a comparative understanding of a specific educational field lies in the analysis of different *relational dynamics* and their intertwinement in education politics. I refer metaphorically to Relativistic Dynamics (RD) in physics¹⁸ in order to characterise post-linear understanding of dynamics. RD is a ‘combination of relativistic and quantum theories to describe the relationships between the principal elements of a relativistic system and the forces acting on the system’. In our case of politics, and again on the metaphorical level, *actors, institutions and discursive formations and practices*¹⁹ could be seen as the principal elements, a *policy field* as the relativistic system, and *power* as the main force. Actors may be both individual and collective. Despite the pressures of structures and contingencies over actors, there is always space for creative action. The institutions constitute the very basis of non-discursive practices.²⁰

The methodological approach pursues enquiry on different levels and seeks interrelationships between them. During the past decade we have adopted a multi-level, interrelated design incorporating document analysis, interviews, ethnography and surveys, going beyond the futile juxtaposition of qualitative and quantitative methods. Originality and contributions to knowledge will be achieved through making comparisons, assessing the impacts, developing comparative methodologies, and exploring the power of contrastive theoretical approaches.²¹

My main hypothesis is that the fluidity and movement of a specific policy field of basic education are relative, but reflect the intertwinement of the dynamics from at least four focal perspectives: education policy-making, education governance, family educational strategies and classroom cultures.

The starting point is the assertion that any meaningful research in comparative historical sociology and politics must be based on “the unique nature of a variety of situations in time and space, and the cultural resources available in these situations”²². CADEP identifies three major dimensions that structure the dynamics of all education politics (Table 2).

¹⁶ E.g., Parsons et al. 2000; Seppänen 2006

¹⁷ Simola et al. 2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2013; Simola & Rinne 2011; Kauko et al. 2012; Kauko 2011; forthcoming; Varjo & Kalalahti 2011; Simola 2009; 2011; forthcoming; Simola, Corvalan & Carrasco forthcoming; Sahlström 2011

¹⁸ Fanchi 2005; Laudissa & Rovelli 2008

¹⁹ In formulating the Work Packages (WPs) later we used the concept ‘policy threads’, referring to the thematic formation to be content analysed. Policy-thread analysis is thus a first step towards the discursive formations that will be reconstructed through socio-historical discourse analysis in a Foucauldian sense.

²⁰ Bourdieu 1990; Joas 1996; Meyer & Boli 2009; Meyer & Rowan 2006; Jepperson 2002

²¹ For examples of my theoretical and methodological contributions, see, e.g., Simola 1998; 2009; Simola, Heikkinen & Silvonen 1998; Hannus & Simola 2010; Simola & Rinne 2008; 2011; Simola et al 2011.

²² Hedström & Wittrock 2009, 8

Table 2: A framework for the analysis of dynamics in politics²³

Dimension	Questions
The political situation	What is possible in a specific socio-historical and trans-national situation; the dimension of structural opportunity and change
The political possibilities	What is possible within the existing discursive formations; what is politicized and what is not; problématiques; the dimension of discursive conditions and resources
The political Spielraum	How the relevant actors act and react; how they capitalise on the existing situations and possibilities; space for 'politicking'

Politics as a situation connotes the idea of an opportune moment, or *kairos*, when the politics can be changed and when a historical rupture is visible. In order to make a change the actors have to notice the *kairos*, or make a radical re-interpretation in order to form such a moment. In understanding the changes in the socio-historical situation we aim to go beyond the 'unbearable narrowness of the national view' in order to comprehend how the national is constituted by its interconnections, meetings and crossings with the trans-national. Political possibilities concern how actors find and create the different alternatives for acting "otherwise".²⁴ If the political situation is a *structural* dimension of political change, this could be seen as a *discursive* perspective on the *problématiques*.²⁵ Framed by the political situation and possibilities, a major element of the dynamics in politics is the *Spielraum* for 'politicking'. This refers to the potential of actors to 'play with contingency', to capitalise on existing situations and possibilities in the complexities.²⁶ The interplay between these three dimensions, which may vary considerably across countries and contexts, is the basis on which dynamics are analysed. It provides the framework for orienting the empirical research.

To concretise the idea of CADEP, allow me to encapsulate the intertwinement of socio-historical dynamics in Finnish basic education on four levels of analysis according to our tentative results²⁷. It is the specific intertwinement of *buffering embedded egalitarianism* in policy-making, *empowering solicited trust* in governance, *obstructing decent modesty* in educational family strategies and *intensifying paternalistic progressivism* in classroom cultures that makes Finnish basic education move. It is noteworthy that the four nouns (i.e. egalitarianism, trust, modesty and progressivism) referring to dynamics are *doubly attributed*: first with an adjective (i.e. embedded, solicited, decent and paternalistic) particularising the specific property, and second with a verb (buffering, empowering, obstructing and intensifying) referring to the main effect of the specific dynamics. This crystallises the main discursive formations referring to the actors and institutions (implicitly through the attributes here, however) between which the constitutive dynamics are to be reconstructed. It tells us, interestingly enough, that some dynamics are defensive or preventive whereas others are offensive or forward-oriented.

Thus, we have analysed the Finnish basic education politics from the CADEP perspective. In addition to the document and statistical analyses it has conducted since the mid-1990s, in the last ten years my research unit has conducted eight interview studies of policy-makers, principals, teachers and parents, four surveys among principals, teachers, parents and students, and three major ethnographic studies on schools. We have reported our findings on four foci of analysis: policy-making and governance, educational family strategies and the schooling culture and the concluding monograph is forthcoming²⁸.

²³ Simola 2011; Kauko, Simola, Varjo & Kalalahti. 2012; Palonen 2006

²⁴ Palonen 2006; Kauko 2011

²⁵ Simola 2009; Simola 2010; Popkewitz 2008; Ball 2001; Dean 1999

²⁶ Kauko 2011; Simola 2010; Palonen 2006.

²⁷ This is the main content of my forthcoming book *Contingent Dynamics in the Politics of Finnish Basic Schooling - From hierarchical rankings towards mutual learning in educational comparisons* (Routledge).

²⁸ On policy-making and governance, see e.g., Simola et al 2002; 2009; 2011a; b; Simola 2005; Simola & Rinne 2011; Ozga et al 2011, on educational family strategies, see e.g., Poikolainen 2012; Seppänen et al 2012, Falabella et al, forth-

The basic research material will include policy documents and policy-maker and administrator interviews in four Nordic countries. Although our Junior Researchers master Scandinavian languages, we surely will need assistance from the Nordic partners in our Centre of Excellence. If the extension option is realised we also plan to conduct family interviews and a classroom ethnography and video study and to carry out a survey, although the details will naturally be negotiated with future partners. Tables 3 and 4 below refer only to education policy-making and governance, leaving the extension to family educational strategies and classroom cultures open.

Material management and ethical issues All the research participants (policymakers and in the extended option also parents, teachers and pupils) will be kept fully informed about the research, its purpose and voluntary nature. All the data will be in the possession of the research team, stored in the servers of the University of Helsinki. It will remain confidential throughout the research project and will be handled in compliance with Finnish legislation. The interview and survey data will be organised and coded so that after the project they can be archived and stored in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD, University of Tampere), thus allowing for the possibility of reuse in other studies.

All the policy documents used within project will be public and accessible without restriction. All the data concerning parents, pupils, schools and their personnel will be confidential, and identifying characteristics will be modified or withheld in order to preserve confidentiality. The statistical electronic data will form a database, with a publicly accessible description of the file and its use. The family ethnographic and video research will include audio-visual data, in full compliance with standard ethical procedures for classroom recordings. In the case of any doubt about ethical procedures we will consult the Ethical Board of the Faculty of Behavioural Sciences (University of Helsinki).

4. Implementation: timetable, distribution of work and budget

Tables 3 and 4 set the pace for the whole project through the intermediate goals (IG) and the related tasks and work packages (WP), deliverables and milestones (MIL), and the symposia. All the WPs will culminate in a comparative milestone publication (MIL1-5), at which point we will be able to assess whether or not we have reached the IG, and if we should adapt the project plan. The PI will have responsibility for the four comparative milestone articles (MIL1-4) and the books (FIN-CASE/Simola forthcoming, SYM5 and MIL5). Both junior researchers, supported by the PI, will be responsible for producing five articles on their comparative study (COMP1-5). R1 will compare basic education policy-making and governance in Sweden and Norway and R2 in Denmark and Iceland. There will be an annual symposium connected to the sessions of the Advisory Board meetings supporting the progress of the project.

Table 3. The work packages (WPs) related to the intermediate goals (IGs)

Focus, re-search material / Feasibility	WP1: Central policy threads	WP2: Main actors and institutions	WP3: Essential discursive formations	WP4: Constitutive dynamics	WP5: Comparison
Intermediate goals	IG1: Historical content analysis of the central policy threads in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden touching all foci	IG2: Socio-historical and relational analysis of the main actors and institutions in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden	IG3: Socio-historical and relational analysis of essential discursive formations in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden	IG4: Socio-historical and relational analysis of constitutive dynamics in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden	IG5: Socio-historical and relational modelling in comparison between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden
Research objectives	Base for all	O1–O3	O1–O3	O1–O3	O4
Policy-making / elite interviews, national policy documents	Reviewing earlier research and policy documents with a focus on historical politicisation and processes affecting relations between actors.	Interviews with national policy-makers central to the policy threads. Starting the analysis of the relations between institutions	Analysis of the research material. Juxtaposing the policy threads with the interview material.	Deep analysis of the research material. Finding the dynamics inside the discursive formations.	Comparing the dynamics with respect to national and trans-national perspectives.
Governance / interviews and regional / local policy documents	Analysing earlier research and policy documents with a focus on historical politicisation and the processes affecting relations between actors.	Interviews with the regional and local policy-makers. Starting the analysis of the relations between institutions and actors	Analysis of the research material. Juxtaposing the policy threads with national and local material.	Meta-analysis of the research material. Finding the dynamics inside the discursive formations.	Comparing the dynamics with respect to national and trans-national perspectives.

Table 4: Gantt chart for the implementation of work packages, deliverables and milestone publications

Acronym of task	Author (support)	Deliverable article, symposium or milestone publication	-14	-15	-16	-17	-18
The Academy of Finland Funding period							
WP1: Central policy threads							
MIL1	PI	Milestone article 1: Comparing the central policy threads in Nordic countries					
COMP1x2	R1R2PI	National comparison article 1: Analysing the central policy threads					
SYM1	PI (4xR)	Symposium, "Historical dynamics of basic Education in Nordic Countries", and AB session at the XI European Social Science History conference ESSHC					
WP2: Main actors and institutions							
MIL2	PI	Milestone article 2: Comparing the actors of in Nordic countries					
COMP2x2	R1R2PI	National comparison article 2: Analysing the central actors					
SYM2	PI (all)	Symposium and Advisory Board session at the Annual Conference of The XIX International Sociological Association ISA World Congress of Sociology					
WP3: Essential discursive formations							
MIL3	PI	Milestone article 3: Comparing the discursive formations in Nordic countries					
COMP3x2	R1R2PI	National comparison article 3: Analysing the discursive formations					
SYM3	PI (all)	Symposium, "Changes in Nordic basic education from a discursive perspective" and Advisory Board session at the NERA conference					
WP4: Constitutive dynamics							
FINCASE	PI	Forthcoming book on constitutive dynamics in Finland (Simola forthcoming): <i>Comparative Analytics of Dynamics in Education Politics - From the Finnish PISA Miracle towards Mutual Learning in the Development of Schooling</i>					
MIL4	PI	Milestone article 4: Comparing the national and trans-national dynamics of all cases					
COMP4x2	R1R2PI	National comparison article 4: Analysing the national and trans-national dynamics					
SYM4	PI (all)	Symposium and Advisory Board session at the XVII World Congress of The World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES)					
WP5: Comparison							
MIL5	PI	Milestone book: CADEP as a new model for comparing dynamics in education politics					
COMP5x2	R1R2PI	Article: Forming a theoretical model of dynamics based on Nordic countries					
SYM5	PI (all)	International symposium and Advisory Board session in Helsinki: "Beyond Comparison" and an edited book					

The innovative synergies for working together will be based on the new Nordic Centre of Excellence and the CADEP Network, which was created a year ago to discuss and develop comparative education research. The Network consists of eminent professors from fifteen different countries (see CV of the PI), and some of them will constitute the Advisory Board (AB). Initially, until we know if the extension option will materialise, the Advisory Board will comprise the four Nordic colleagues mentioned above and two outstanding scholars in the field of comparative education policy research: Roger Dale (University of Bristol) and Bob Lingard (University of Queensland).

Budget The budget is presented in detail on the relevant electronic form. It is based mainly on the salaries of R1 and R2 as Post Docs for four years, and travel costs. The essential travel costs include the funding of the annual symposia and of two nine-month working periods for both Junior Researchers in their case countries.

5. The Team, research environment and mobility

The Research Team will consist of the applicant as the Principal Investigator (PI) and two post-doc researchers (R1 and R2). The competence of the PI covers the research project as a whole, with expertise in comparative research and socio-historical discourse analysis.

As mentioned above, this research will focus on dynamics in education policy-making and governance. The establishment of the Nordic Centre of Excellence *Justice through Education* (JustEd) gives, however, the option to extend the project to include family educational strategies and classroom cultures, which would complement the picture of dynamics in basic education politics in the Nordic countries. JustEd has propitiously created a 'dream-team' particularly for this project. Peter Dahler-Larsen (University of Copenhagen), Lisbeth Lundahl (University of Umeå), Kirsti Klette

(University of Oslo) and Ingólfur Johannessen (University of Iceland) are all partners in JustEd, founding members of the CADEP Network and outstanding scholars in their field. There is no doubt about their ability to procure funding for one or two junior researchers to study family educational strategies and classroom cultures in their countries. Therefore the extension of the project to all four focal levels is highly likely.

If the project is extended, two more members of KUPOLI will join the Team. Senior Researcher Fritjof Sahlström²⁹ is a specialist in classroom ethnography and video research, and thus in the focus on dynamics in classroom cultures although his research also covers education policy-making and governance. Junior Researcher Mira Kalalahti³⁰ specialises in family educational strategies. Our Nordic colleagues mentioned above will also enrich the Team in the case of extension.

The Team's research environment is excellent. The PI's KUPOLI research unit (*New Policy, Politics and Governance in Education*) is part of the *Centre for Sociology of Education (SOCE)*, co-founded in 1998 and still headed by the PI. KUPOLI employs 15 full-time senior and junior researchers and doctoral students. SOCE received excellent and outstanding scores in the International Evaluation of Research and Doctoral Training at the University of Helsinki, 2005-2010 due to our longstanding tradition of analysing the socio-historical trajectories of education. In 2013 SOCE was appointed to the Nordic Centre of Excellence *Justice through Education (JustEd)*, which is funded by NordForsk, the organisation for Nordic research cooperation under the Nordic Council of Ministers, for the years 2013-2018.

In terms of mobility the application covers two nine-month field-study periods for both Junior Researchers at universities in their case countries, supported by the local *JustEd* Professor. There will be plenty of other opportunities within the mobility programme of our Centre of Excellence.

Researcher training, doctoral studies and the promotion of careers The PI heads both the *Sociology and Politics of Education Master's Programme (KSP)*³¹ covering three Finnish universities, and the Doctoral Sub-Programme for *Comparative Research on Educational Policy, Economy and Assessment (CREPEA)*³², which is part of the *Finnish International Doctoral Programme of Education (FiDPEL)*³³. Consequently the project is well placed in terms of attracting talented Master's and Doctoral Students. Students from all four of SOCE's Master's Thesis seminars and its Doctoral seminar will be systematically incorporated into the project at the annual curriculum discussion within the Institute of Behavioural Sciences. The team will offer two junior researchers as supervisors of doctoral theses, and hence advance and support their career development. Further, empirical collaboration at the international sites will provide then with invaluable networking opportunities.

Gender equality Males (9) and females (6) are rather equally represented within the KUPOLI research unit, where the project is based. The composition of the research teams varies with respect to gender, and two of the three researchers in this team are female.

6. Expected results and possible risks

Table 5 shows the potential benefits of bringing dynamics analysis into the field of comparative research in terms of analysing the dimensional complexity (WP1-WP3) from a comparative perspective (WP4). Like any innovative venture, the project also carries high risks. However, our comparisons between Chile and Finland (PASC) have turned out to be promising³⁴.

²⁹ See, e.g., Sahlström 2011; 2009; Sahlström & Lindblad 1998;

³⁰ See, e.g., Varjo, Kalalahti & Silvennoinen (in press); Kalalahti (2012); Kalalahti & Varjo (2012). Kalalahti's dissertation *Equal educational opportunities – school achievements, class and trust* will be accepted during 2013.

³¹ http://www.helsinki.fi/kupoli/index_english.htm

³² <http://edu.utu.fi/sivustot/kasva/en/subprogrammes/crepea/>

³³ <http://edu.utu.fi/sivustot/kasva/en/> Strongly related to the focus of this research project, FiDPEL will organise an international seminar "Educational Politics in an Enabling Welfare State" in Oxford, April 9-11, 2013

³⁴ Simola, Corvalan, Carrasco & Kauko forthcoming.

Table 5: Risk management and feasibility

	WP1: Political situation	WP2: Political possibilities	WP3: Political <i>Spielraum</i> and constitutive dynamics	WP4: Comparison of dynamics
Risk / gain	Low risk / medium gain	Medium risk / high gain	Medium risk / high gain	High risk / high gain
Feasibility	Although this is an introductory stage of the study, contrasting the central policy threads in the case countries may contribute considerably to the field.	We have been able to do this in the Finnish case and the Chilean case is in progress. We will be able to analyse actors and institutions in line with our research objectives (O1-O3), but it will depend a lot on each case how far the analysis will reach and how complete/valid the conclusions will be.		This is the most uncharted area of research and the risk associated with it is accordingly high.

If successful, this research project will make a major contribution on both the practical and the theoretical level. It will open up various new horizons and will have an impact not only on education research but also on other fields of comparative historical sociology and politics. First, through its fresh theoretical and methodological approach it may affect the comparative, socio-historical and trans-national understanding of political relations in the construction of educational fields. It may facilitate progress beyond rankings, namings and shamings in education policies towards mutual understanding and learning in allowing the analysis of socio-historical development processes and not only the end products. Third and finally, through the development of new analytical tools it will open up avenues for both educational development and education consultancy and export.

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