EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE
EAD 925 Spring 2010
Tuesday 7:00 – 9:50pm; Erickson Hall 226

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Course Introduction:

The phrase "policy and practice" has become ubiquitous in American education. It can denote many things, but among them a strong trend for policy generated at state and federal levels to seek dominion over what goes on in schools. Such a trend has sometimes been styled as "government in the classroom." To an increasing degree in U.S. society, we seek to influence what goes on in schools through public policy. Consequently, educators at all levels should have some knowledge of the issues raised when policy seeks influence over practice.

Any number of dates might serve as starting points for the turn to policy in U.S. education. One might be the launching of Sputnik in the late 1950s, which stimulated the math-science curriculum development projects sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF projects constituted an early effort by the federal government to directly influence both what was taught and how it was taught (methods/aims of instruction) in U.S. classrooms. Or, we could date the course from the 1954 Supreme Court decision--Brown v. Topeka Board of Education--that ultimately led to school desegregation. Or, we might use as landmark the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, whose various sections introduced compensatory education (Title I), capacity building grants to states, and innovation grants to schools. Any of these events might be reasonable starting points, but they all signal the same development--a dramatic increase over the last half century of government in the classroom. Today, of course, the "No Child Left Behind" Act, which is the re-authorization of ESEA, Title I, is a breathtaking expansion of federal authority that is working turmoil (for good or ill) across the country in many if not most schools.

Any historical overview of this trend in American education would note the relative emphasis placed in different periods on the goals of equity vs. "excellence" or "quality," and on the issues of federalism--the allocation of authority and responsibility across the levels of a federal system. Yet more recently, new issues—standards, accountability, the role of private, market-oriented forces vs. public government programs—have entered the debate and must be taken into account.

Equity - Quality. One pervasive tension within educational policymaking has focused on goals. Certain policies have taken aim at correcting inequities and redressing civil rights. Into this category would fall such broad federal policies as desegregation, bilingual education, sex equity, mainstreaming the handicapped, and others. Both courts and legislatures have pursued a variety

of remedies in the sphere of civil rights, equity, and social justice. Other policies, including the effort to establish learning standards and to hold schools, teachers, and students accountable have been pursued in the name of excellence or quality in education. Whether looking back or looking ahead, there has been a steady tension in American education between efforts to increase equity and social justice or to improve the quality of education overall.

Federalism. Another tension concerns the allocation of roles and responsibilities across the levels of the federal system. The long tradition of local control in the U.S. has gradually given way in the face of increasing state and national government activism. The Federal government dramatically increased its role in the sixties and seventies, particularly around the equity and civil rights agenda, but the eighties belonged to the states, following the Reagan Administration's de-emphasis of Federal activity. Over the past decade states have pursued "quality" requirements, student and teacher testing, and other measures. Since the school finance reforms of the seventies, states have steadily assumed a greater share of school expenditures, so that today educational outlays constitute the single largest item of most state budgets, typically accounting for one of every three state dollars spent. The shift in financing schools to the state level has meant increasing control there as well.

Interestingly, however, recent reforms call for a national curriculum and national student testing. It appears that one trend in the first decade of the 21st century may be the re-emergence of the Federal government, but in a new, standard-setting role. Such a role would have been unthinkable politically even ten years ago.

Standards and accountability. The trend that has been most pronounced in the last decade has been the effort to establish a variety of standards—for learning, teaching, schooling, etc.—linked to various forms of accountability. Standards have been promulgated in the name of both quality and equity, but the tools used to support standards are controversial. Most prominent are high stakes assessments that most states today have instituted. Assessment as an instrument of public policy is one of the most critical issues in American education today. Do assessments direct educators to desirable practices? Do they encourage more attention to the education of underserved students? Do they narrow the curriculum? Put brutal pressures on children? Lead to many forms of cheating by schools and districts in order to avoid sanctions? All these issues and more are under debate today, with evidence and arguments on all sides.

Choice and privatization. A final significant trend is the shift away from government solutions of all kinds to an increased role for private sector, market-oriented, local solutions to a wide range of problems. New interests and organizations have risen to champion this agenda, abetted intellectually by what is known as "public choice theory," which catalogues government failure as a form of intervention in human affairs. In any event, there is a relatively new agenda in American education that seeks reform through such means as charter schools; use of vouchers or tuition tax credits to encourage family choice of schooling; open enrollment plans either within or between districts; the rise of private firms to supply public schooling (e.g., Edison, Teach for America, National Heritage Academies); and the use of private contracting for public services. Such policy mechanisms share the aims of increasing family choice over schooling, expanding the schooling options available, harnessing private interests to the public good, and utilizing the dynamic of market competition to discipline educational organizations.

<u>The relationship between policy and practice</u>. Developments of the sort just outlined raise many questions and issues worthy of exploration. This course, however, concentrates primarily on a particular issue in educational policy, which is the effort to shape classroom instruction through policy means. Hence, when we use the term "policy and practice," we will largely focus on instructional policy, with some attention to curriculum as well.

Logic and Aims of the Course

"Policy and practice" often assumes that the arrow of influence directs from policy to practice. This is the conventional relationship. But much contemporary scholarship reverses the flow to explore the influence of practice on policy, how policy may be crafted out of practice. And, how various forces may mediate the relationship regardless of which way the arrow points. It probably makes sense then to regard policy and practice as indicating a reciprocal or recursive relationship mediated via a number of contexts and influences.

Further, "practice" may denote any number of things, as indicated by the word preceding "policy." For instance, curriculum policy, instructional policy, student aid policy, special education policy, categorical policy, and many others.

This course will utilize the conventional assumption most of the time and seek to understand how policy influences practice. Moreover, we will concentrate on teaching or instruction as the target for policy. Other choices are certainly possible, but we will have our hands full within these boundaries.

The course is divided into three parts. We begin with a study of "teaching," considering various ways of conceptualizing teaching as it serves as a target for policy. In the second part of the course, we turn to our other key word, "policy," and examine policy design (instruments and institutions) and policy implementation, which we consider from the perspective of policy and from the perspective of practice. Then, in the third segment of the course, we examine what might mediate or condition the relationship between policy and practice.

Course Requirements and Grading

A key component of this course is active engagement with the texts. Engaged learners think critically, expansively, and deeply. Active engagement requires a significant amount of time beyond the time it takes to merely read a text. Engagement requires time to think, make sense of new ideas, and share your thoughts with others. As you engage the texts I hope you will consider ideas, problems, and solutions you might not have otherwise considered. My personal belief is that educational issues are profoundly complex. In a world of few absolutes, it may be true that there are no easy answers in education. Although I can't promise that you will find the answers to important educational questions, I hope you will gain a more finely tuned sense of the complex relationship between policy and practice.

As I have stated, active engagement is more than reading but, reading is definitely a prerequisite for engagement. Please come to class prepared. This means reading the assigned texts, thinking

about them, and formulating queries, concerns, and comments that you can bring to class to share with others. You will find that I spend very little time lecturing. In accord with constructivist philosophy I believe that students learn more from a guided dialog with one another than they can from a lecture. As such, participants are expected to come to class prepared to engage in discussions about the assigned readings, to teach and to learn from each other in the spirit of intellectual inquiry and personal growth, and to assist in crafting a dynamic and shared learning experience.

Another important aspect of course participation is full engagement in the on-line classroom forum. We will use our ANGEL website (http://angel.msu.edu) as an important means of communication and you are expected to log in regularly and frequently. Five class sessions will take place exclusively on-line in an asynchronous discussion format. Please remember that the on-line format enables me, as the instructor, to monitor your on-line behavior. That is, I can view the number of times you log on, the pages that you visit, and the duration of those visits. I say this with the intention of disclosure, not to sound threatening.

You will have an opportunity to evidence your learning in three written assignments. Before beginning a doctoral program few students realize that the process of becoming a scholar is synonymous with becoming a writer. It is commonly said that the process of writing clarifies our thinking. Note that writing is a process and not a singular act. Good writing develops over time and with practice. Unfortunately, a semester is a short amount of time with fixed deadlines. I encourage you to give careful attention to your written work, revising and carefully editing what you write.

Required Reading:

Kennedy, M. (2005). *Inside teaching: How classroom life undermines reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN: 0-674-02245-9; [cost $26.00; paperback]

Lortie, D. C. (2002). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0-226-49353-9; [cost $16.00; paperback]

In addition to the books listed above, you will select one book of your choice to read. Additional course readings will be posted on Angel. See calendar below for specifics.

Assignments:
Course assignments are briefly described below. More details will follow.

Attendance and Participation (15%)
Participation (listening and speaking) in class discussion, whether on line or in person, is an important part of your learning process as well as your classmates'. Most importantly, participation is more than mere talking. It includes:
1. accurately representing the authors' ideas,
2. engaging the author in a kind of dialog—agree, disagree, question, etc…
3. engaging your classmates in respectful conversation
4. listening and responding to what you have heard from others

5. staying focused on coursework

Please be mindful of how you use technology during class time. While it is appropriate to bring your laptop to class and use it during class time, it should not distract you from the course. Surfing the web, social networking, responding to email, etc… are not appropriate uses of your computer during class time. As a general rule, avoid having your eyes permanently fixed to your computer screen as it gives the impression that you are not invested in the conversation and is disrespectful of your classmates' contributions. Relatedly, please set your phone to vibrate and refrain from texting during class.

In addition to face-to-face participation, four class sessions will take place exclusively on-line (1/19, 2/2, 2/16, 3/23). These class sessions will be structured as asynchronous discussion groups. Each discussion group will focus on a different query that I will pose. Everyone must respond to that query within a set time frame. Then, everyone will post responses to two classmates' responses within a second time frame. Finally, you will reply to at least one comment that a classmate made about your original post. Time frame:
- First post: before midnight (11:59 pm) on the Saturday before class
- Respond to two classmates: between midnight on Saturday & midnight on Monday.
- Reply to minimum of one classmate: between midnight on Saturday & midnight Monday

Finally, please attend all classes. Absence from one session will result in the loss of 1%. Subsequent absences will result in increasing penalties (2% for the second absence, 3% for the third and so on). Upon arrangement with the instructor, accommodations to this policy may be made for extraordinary circumstances.

Essay #1 (30%)
A 7-page response to a query related to sessions 2-5. **Due: Feb 21**

Essay # 2 (25%)
A 5-page policy analysis applying concepts from sessions 7-10. **Due: Mar 28**

Essay #3 (30%):
In the final essay you will select a book from a list that I provide (or, with my approval, another relevant book) and prepare a critical essay (10-12 pages). **Due: May 9**

Grading and Attendance

Assignments:		**Scale:**		
	Participation: 15%		95-100%	4.0
	Essay 1: 30%		89-94%	3.5
	Essay 2: 25%		83-88%	3.0
	Essay 3: 30%		77-82%	2.5
			71-76%	2.0
			65-70%	1.5
			59-64%	1.0

The grading scale for MSU is 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0. I commonly apply smaller increments when grading assignments but these are the final grade categories. Please note that A 4.0 indicates excellent work, nearly free of critique. A 3.5 would be assigned to good work that satisfactorily completes the assignment. A 3.0 would be given for completed work that is marked by some inadequacies. A grade below 3.0 is a sign of serious problems. <u>No late work is accepted without prior arrangements with the professor and without penalty</u>.

Accommodation:

It is MSU policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet certain requirements. Students with special needs are encouraged to speak with me. They may also access the Services Office at (517) 355-2270.

For other MSU policies please see the website: http://www.msu.edu/

Office hours: Office hours are by appointment. Please contact me via email to set up a time.

CALENDAR: EAD 925, Spring 2010 [1.05.10]

Session	Date	Readings	Activities & Assignments
1	01/12/10	Introduction	
		Enduring problem: improving student achievement. How do we ensure that *all* students receive a "quality" education? **Education Trust 2009 Michigan Summary**	Send email to Melinda. Complete ANGEL profile & read classmates' profiles.
Part I: Teaching Practice			
2	01/19/10	Reforming Practice	
		Kennedy, M. (2005). *Inside teaching: How classroom life undermines reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [chps 1-8, appendix, notes]	**On-line**
3	01/26/10	The Culture of Schools	
		Lortie, D. C. (2002). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [chps 1-9]	
4	02/02/10	Teaching as a Policy Target	
		Buchmann, M. (1986). Role Over Person: Morality and Authenticity in Teaching. *Teachers College Record,* 87(4). **Shulman, L.** (1983). Autonomy and obligation. In L. Shulman and G. Sykes (Eds.). *Handbook of Teaching and Policy* (pp. 484-504). New York: Longman.	**On-line**
5	02/09/10	What's at Stake?	
		Green, T., F. (1994). Policy questions: A conceptual study. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 2(7). **Green, T. F.** (1983). Excellence, equity, and equality. In L. Shulman & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Handbook of Teaching and Policy* (pp. 318-341). New York: Longman.	
6	02/16/10	Reflection and Synthesis	
			On-line **Essay #1 Due: Sun, Feb 21**

Part II: Approaches to Policy			
	02/23/10	Class cancelled- Melinda sick	
7	03/02/10	Policy Problem Definition	
		Stone, D. (2002). Symbols. In *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making* (p. 137-162). NY: WW Norton & Co. **Stone, D.** (2002). *Numbers*. In *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making* (p. 163-187). NY: WW Norton & Co.	
	03/09/10	**SPRING BREAK!**	
8	03/16/10	Policy Instruments	
		McDonnell, L. M., & Elmore, R. F. (1987). Getting the job done: Alternative policy instruments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 133-152. **Schneider, A, & Ingram, H.** (1990). Behavioral assumptions of policy tools. *Journal of Politics*, 55(2), 510-529.	
9	<mark>03/23/10</mark>	Policy Institutions and Implementation	
		Clune, W. H. (1987). Institutional choice as a theoretical framework for research on educational policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 117-132. **Elmore, R. F.** (1983). Complexity and control: What legislators and administrators can do about implementing public policy. In L. Shulman & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Handbook of Teaching and Policy* (pp. 342-369). New York: Longman.	**On-line**
10	03/30/10	Policy Institutions and Implementation	
		Weiss, C. H. (1995). The four "I's" of school reform: How interests, ideology, information, and institution affect teachers and principals. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(4), 571-592.	**Essay # 2 Due: Sun, April 4**

Part III: The Intersection of Policy and Practice			
11	04/06/10	**NO CLASS**	
		Read one of the following: **Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. C.** (2001). *Learning policy: When state education reform works*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. **Barnes, C.** (2002). *Standards reform in high-poverty schools: Managing conflict & building capacity.* New York: Teachers College Press. **Firestone, W., Schorr, R., & Monfils, L. F.** (2004). *The ambiguity of teaching to the test: Standards, assessment, and educational reform.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. **Spillane, J.** (2004). *Standards deviation: How schools misunderstand education policy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. **Supovitz, J. A.** (2006). *The case for district-based reform: Leading, building, and sustaining school improvement.* Cambridge, MA, Harvard Education Press.	
12	04/13/10	The Policy-Practice Relationship	
		Cohen, D. K., & Barnes, C. A. (1993). Pedagogy and policy. In D. K. Cohen, M. W. McLaughlin & J. E. Talbert (Eds.), *Teaching for understanding* (pp. 207-229). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. **McLaughlin, M., & Talbert, J.** (1993). How the world of students and teachers challenges policy coherence. In S. Fuhrman (Ed.), *Designing coherent education policy: Improving the system* (pp. 220-249). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.	

13	04/20/10	The Policy-Practice Relationship	
		Spillane, J., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387-431. **Coburn, C.** (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23(2), 145-170.	Complete SIRS forms
14	04/27/10	The Policy-Practice Relationship	
		Hill, H. C. (2001). Policy is not enough: Language and the interpretation of state standards. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(2), 288-318. **Rosen, L.** (2001). Myth making and moral order in a debate on mathematics education policy. In M. Sutton & B. A. U. Levinson (Eds.), *Policy as practice: Toward a socio-cultural analysis of educational policy* (pp. 295-316). Westport, CT: Ablex. **Datnow, A., Hubbard, L., & Conchas, G. Q.** (2001). How context mediates policy: The implementation of single gender public schooling in California. *Teachers College Record*, 103(2), 184-206.	READ TWO OF THE THREE ARTICLES
15	05/04/10	**EXAM WEEK**	
		Class does not meet.	* **Essay #3 Due: Sun May 9**