

Internalising externalisation: Utilisation of international knowledge in education policymaking

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Drawing on the construct of ‘externalisation’, this article examines how and why national policy experts use international knowledge in education policymaking. To understand how national policy experts deal with external source of information and expertise, I analysed the bibliographic references in policy documents prepared for an education reform and conducted network-cued interviews with local policy experts in the United States, South Korea, and Norway. The results revealed that national policy actors’ utilisation of international knowledge varies across countries in terms of frequency, function, and level of engagement. The national differences suggest that each country has internalised the act of externalisation in the national policy process, reflecting its own policymaking and reform contexts.

Keywords: international knowledge; knowledge utilisation; externalisation; education policy; comparative education

Introduction

There is a widespread belief that policymaking is steeped in evidence-based decisions, drawing on knowledge, data, and information. Governments habitually refer to evidence-based policymaking to argue that they use knowledge to make informed decisions to solve policy problems. It is part of the rationalisation commonly observed in bureaucratic modern states that seek sources of legitimacy from rationality. Thus, in theory, the criteria for knowledge utilisation in evidence-based policymaking are effectiveness, relevancy, and accuracy of the information, and policies based on evidence that is an objective outcome of the scientific assessment of identified problems should be the most effective solutions.

Nevertheless, the rational framework has repeatedly been demystified. Scholars have found that the knowledge policymakers use and how they use it are contingent on each other and require a more nuanced examination (Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007; Rich 1997; Weible 2008). Interestingly, the very myth of evidence-based policymaking allowed policymakers to strategically utilise knowledge regardless of its effectiveness and relevancy. While using the language of rationality and objectivity, policymakers often cherry-pick knowledge that reinforces their political stance (Dunlop 2014; Schrefler 2010). In addition, policymakers may ignore certain knowledge to avoid taking a clear stance on controversial policy issues or unpopular policy options (Schrefler 2010).

Previous scholarship has contributed to understanding whether and how knowledge is used in the policy process. What has not been discussed much, however, is the use of ‘international knowledge’, the body of knowledge produced outside national boundaries. In an era of globalisation, it has become much easier for policy actors to access the ideas and practices of other countries. It indicates that knowledge is no longer restricted to national territories, but travels across national borders and affects various public sectors. Education policymaking is no exception. National education policies are now influenced by bodies of knowledge produced not only domestically but also internationally.

International knowledge often facilitates the process of benchmarking, standardisation, and comparison and consequently influences policy development and implementation in each country (Ball 2012; Ozga 2009). In particular, recent literature has noted the crucial role of international organisations in today’s global governing complex in education by generating, managing, and disseminating knowledge across countries (Ydesen 2019). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), administered by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for example, has been studied as evidence for policy change or support for existing policy direction in numerous

national contexts. National policy actors may apply international knowledge to problematise or glorify current systems, legitimise policy ideas and proposals, or advance policy actors' own agenda (Steiner-Khamsi 2004). Furthermore, references to international knowledge can build coalitions and mediate conflicts between opposing advocacy groups by offering an external source of knowledge (Steiner-Khamsi 2004).

This study investigates why and how policy actors use international knowledge in education policymaking by examining the bibliographic references in policy documents prepared for an education reform and the interviews with the authors. Analysis of policy document references allows this study to identify a more intentional and selective application of knowledge. The practice of referencing in a policy document is inherently different from the practice in other forms of deliveries such as public speech or newspaper articles because it is part of the official, institutionalised policy process. In addition, this study is attentive to context-specific circumstances by comparing the use of international knowledge in three countries with distinctive policymaking settings: the United States, South Korea (hereafter Korea), and Norway.

Conceptually, I draw on the construct of 'externalisation' which was coined by Niklas Luhmann and adapted by Jurgen Schriewer and Gita Steiner-Khamsi in comparative education policy. Luhmann's work on systems theory (1995) perceives social systems as self-referential autonomy of their respective subsystems. Each system develops its own semantics and seeks to survive through communication, drawing on legitimate language, within its own system. However, in a time of uncertainty when it fails to address a problem within the system, each system externalises to other systems to survive as long as the meaning attached to the externalisation can be translated into its own logic and code (Luhmann 1997).

Inspired by Luhmann's systems theory, Schriewer (1989) found that to legitimise contested educational policies and practices, national policymakers use international trends or

examples as sources of authority. Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi (2004) applied the concept of externalisation to explain discursive and factual policy borrowing and lending in education. Since then, numerous scholars have investigated why and how policy actors refer to other national educational systems or globalisation to legitimise local policy changes and discussed the role of externalisation in education policymaking (e.g., Baek 2021; Santos and Kauko 2020; Takayama and Apple 2008). In addition, many of these studies incorporate the concept of ‘reference societies’, introduced by Bendix (1978), to examine positive and negative responses to the external systems and values (e.g., Waldow, Takayama, and Sung 2014; Waldow 2017). While the literature on externalisation in education studies tends to examine the import of educational policies, practices, and ideas, this study focuses on understanding the utilisation of international knowledge in national ‘expertise-seeking arrangements’ which governments institutionalised to collect information and scientific advice for policymaking (Baek 2020).

Cases and Contexts

This study is part of a larger research project on knowledge utilisation in education policymaking.¹ Specifically, the project examines how policy experts use references in three expertise-seeking arrangements to support their political proposals and decisions. Each of the three countries included in the analysis represents an expertise-seeking arrangement in a distinctive political system: Congressional hearings in the pluralistic US, expert committees in state corporatist Korea and societal corporatist Norway. Comparing the international knowledge utilisation in the US, Korea, and Norway is particularly interesting because of their distinct political systems. Previous studies have shown that a country’s institutionalised

¹ The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Teachers College, Columbia University (IRB #19-163).

policymaking style and culture shapes its policy knowledge utilisation (Christensen and Holst 2017; Jasanoff 2011; Renn 1995). Furthermore, the geographical variation represented by these countries offers insights on utilisation of international knowledge in relation to their choice of ‘reference societies’ (Waldow, Takayama, and Sung 2014).

In this study, I looked at the recent national education reforms in the three countries: the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (US), the 2015 Curriculum Reform (Korea), and the Renewal and Improvement Reform (Norway). Although each reform covers a wide range of topics in great detail, they all address accountability, which has become one of the major global policy ideas that have been widely adopted, along with public-private partnerships and student-centred learning (Verger, Altinyelken, and De Koning 2013). This section provides a brief background information for each reform.

In 2015, ESSA was signed by President Barack Obama to be implemented starting in 2017, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Both the ESSA and NCLB are the reauthorisation of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). ESEA is a major federal education policy that addresses important issues such as primary and secondary education finance and accountability and is supposed to be carried out only for five fiscal years. However, since NCLB signed by President George W. Bush in 2001, controversial characteristics and polarised partisanship in Congress prohibited the law to be reauthorised until 2015. Among the many changes it made, ESSA significantly modified the accountability requirements mandated by NCLB so that states have more autonomy to establish their own accountability plans and goals, although the US Department of Education should still approve them. Except for the transfer of accountability from the federal government to the states, ESSA still includes substantial accountability components such as standardised testing requirements and outcome-based rewards and sanctions.

Korea's 2015 Curriculum Reform is the ninth revision since its first national curriculum in 1954. In 2013, the government initiated the development of the 2015 Curriculum Reform to revise the 2009 Curriculum Reform. The reform started with the name 'the Humanities and Science Integrated Curriculum Reform' because it originated in Minister Seo's intention 'to integrate the humanities and science tracks to promote a common education for all high school students' (Jang 2017, 42) which remained as the main tenet of the reform. Major changes included strengthening humanities subjects, 'software education', and 'safety education' and highlighting the need for in-depth learning and future core competencies. The reform also claimed the educational paradigm shift to 'happy education' and provided the guidelines for the Free-Semester Program (FSP) (which required schools to offer at least 170 hours of FSP activities [e.g., career exploration, free-choice, arts & sports, and club activities], remove standardised exams, and promote student-centred instruction during the free-semester) (Baek 2021; Korean Ministry of Education 2013). These drastic changes caused heated debates among stakeholders with different interests, political motivations, and educational beliefs.

The Renewal and Improvement Reform in Norway that went into effect in 2020 was designed to renew and improve the previous reform of 2006. In 2006, Norway adopted a new school reform, the Knowledge Promotion Reform in response to the 'PISA shock', which refers to the surprising results of student performance in the PISA. This fundamental reform, which replaced previous curricular reforms at the primary and secondary levels, set out subject-specific objectives, content, and instructional time and emphasised the importance of assessing outcomes (Prøitz 2015). It also identified measurable outcomes and introduced monitoring instruments (e.g., surveys, legal inspections, and national tests) (Hatch 2013). In contrast to the 2006 reform that called for radical changes in educational approaches, the reform in 2020 was incremental, keeping previous emphasis on outcome-oriented, test-based

accountability approach at the broad-level. However, it also highlighted the importance of early intervention, formative evaluation, deep learning, and social development (Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2020).

Research Design

In this study, I used network-cued interviews as the main method for examining utilisation of international knowledge in education policymaking. This method combines the essential elements of in-depth interviews with bibliometric network analysis. In total, I analysed the bibliometric network database of 743 references in 115 US congressional hearings, 640 references in six Korean expert reports, and 2,337 references in eight Norwegian green papers and the interview sessions with 45 informants in the three countries.

First, I identified a set of source documents that the government used in the preparation of an education reform. Because this study focused on understanding knowledge utilisation, I used policy expert reports for source of information, that is, written testimonies for congressional hearings in the US and commissioned expert reports in Korea and Norway. The policy expert reports constitute ‘official policy knowledge’ because the experts who wrote them were invited or commissioned by the government, and the sources were recognised as a foundational source for the government’s policy ideas. While congressional hearings are held by a legislative body and expert commissions are appointed by an executive body, they have the same political function as the main expertise-seeking arrangement for education policymaking in each country. The commission reports in Korea and Norway are comparable to the written testimony in the US case because the authors of the reports were invited by the government, and the reports functioned as external expertise for the official policy process of policy formulation.

For the US, the ESSA legislative history from the Congressional Information Service identified that 115 hearings contributed to the development of ESSA. I analysed 628 witness testimonies and their references featured in the 115 hearings held between September 29, 2003 and April 29, 2014. For Korea, the general guidelines that the Korean Ministry of Education published in 2014 identified 12 research projects as the central knowledge sources for the 2015 Curriculum Reform. After excluding the six projects that focused on specific subjects, I looked at the other six reports that addressed the general policy directions. For Norway, two white papers were issued by the government for the Renewal and Improvement Reform, and the eight green papers cited by the white papers were used as a data source. The green papers that addressed topics irrelevant to the reform were excluded from the sample.^{2,3}

References were extracted from these source documents, and bibliographic information for each reference such as year of publication, publisher, authors, location of publication (national or international), and type (report, book, academic journal piece, government-published document, other) was added to the database. I calculated network measures such as degree centrality and co-citations to interpret the importance of actors and references in the policy process. This paper pays particular attention to in-degree centrality, which is equal to the total number of incoming connections (e.g., how many times the given reference was cited by source documents). In addition, I performed a supplementary qualitative content analysis of the source documents to understand why and how particular knowledge was utilised in specific contexts. The content analysis contributes to

² The complete list of all source documents can be provided upon request.

³ This study was able to draw on the Norwegian bibliometric data made available by POLNET (Policy Knowledge and Lesson Drawing in Nordic School Reform in an Era of International Comparison); Principal Investigator: Kirsten Sivesind, University of Oslo, funded by the Norwegian Research Council (project number: 283467).

understanding the relationship between the sources and their references (i.e., if the reference was cited in support of or in disagreement with the source's argument).

After completing the bibliometric network analysis, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 12 informants in Norway in May 2019, 15 informants in Korea between July-August, 2019, and 18 informants in the US between October-November, 2019.⁴ Interview participants were recruited from the list of the experts who participated in the congressional hearings and expert commissions analysed in this study.⁵ I used the network findings on degree centrality, types and publication locations, and producers of the references as the cue for interviews and asked the informants to share any thoughts or reactions they had about the findings. The network-cued interviews provided opportunities for the informants to share how they made sense of their policy knowledge utilisation within and across education systems.

Findings

The data reveals that national policy actors' utilisation of international knowledge in education policymaking varies across countries in three ways: frequency, function, and level of engagement. Comparative analysis of how local policy experts deal with external source of information and expertise in the US, Korea, and Norway helps understanding different externalisation practices in each system.

⁴ All interview participants signed an informed consent form. In addition to the written consent, oral consent was obtained at the beginning of the interview.

⁵ During the interviews, several participants shared their concerns about being identified due to the sensitive subject matter, detailed information they provided, and their unique affiliations or occupations. After careful consideration, I decided against providing a summary of participants' affiliations and occupations here to ensure their anonymity.

The Extent and Functions of International Knowledge Utilisation

The findings demonstrated the national differences in terms of frequency as well as the types of international knowledge utilisation, depending on the policy and reform contexts.

Regarding the frequency, policy experts in Korea and Norway often utilised knowledge produced outside the country while the experts in the US did not. As shown in Figure 1, 28% and 32% of the references were international in Korea and Norway, respectively. These percentages are high considering the nature of policy knowledge utilisation that tends to be heavily domestic. By contrast, the US demonstrated the exceptionally low utilisation of internationally produced knowledge. Only 2% of the references were international.

[Figure 1 about here]

The interviews with US policy experts revealed that this lack of international knowledge utilisation in US education policymaking can be explained by its distinctive policymaking contexts which is less receptive to external systems and highlights local transferability. One expert stated, ‘I think that our country is rather xenophobic when it comes to that. We don’t necessarily look to it’. Another interviewee explained that policy experts do not reference internationally produced knowledge because it may be difficult to apply in the US context. He stated, ‘We sometimes call that “American exceptionalism” that we think and, in some respects, we truly are unique from different countries’. He pointed out that comparisons made to other countries such as Finland based on the data produced by international organisations are often criticised because of the issue of comparability:

None of them share the magnitude, nor the diversity, nor the commitment to educating every child that the US does. So from the educational context, I understand why we would not compare to international examples. We focus more on domestically developed information or research because we do think we have a fairly unique context.

Other interview participants also expressed that policymakers often question the applicability

of such knowledge in the US context, which may have led the policy experts to pay less attention to international knowledge. For example, a US government officer stated:

It may be that the PISA scores in math and with the other information that's developed for PISA suggest certain types of policy or pedagogy. But the first thing you're going to hear from a member of Congress is we're not Finland. We're totally different, or we're not one of the PISA countries.

This emphasis on transferability and applicability in the US is indeed consistent with what has been discussed in previous literature. Dennis Niemann and his colleagues (2018) have argued that in federal systems such as the US, the authorities are expected to relate their policy strategies to local contexts more than they are in centralised systems. The policy actors in the federal systems have to consider the dynamics not only between national and subnational contexts but also within the subnational contexts (Niemann, Hartong, and Martens 2018). Perhaps US policy experts' reluctance in utilising international knowledge may be an extension of this existing tension between states' and federal government's role in the US education policy, which was also a central policy topic in ESSA development (Saultz, McEachin, and Fusarelli 2016). Because education is locally administered and controlled at the state level in the US, national education policy actors' boundary of education system tends to be at the state level even when discussing a nationwide education reform. As a result, experts often refer to knowledge produced within the state or for the state context, and even if they feel the need to externalise, they would utilise interstate knowledge before seeking international knowledge. It appears that externalisation to interstate knowledge for many US policy actors was at the same level of externalisation to international knowledge in other countries. This does not mean that the US policy experts completely neglect international knowledge. The US has long made references to external systems; however, the references were often used to problematise its system by pointing to the success of its potential

competitors, such as Soviet Union in the 1950s (e.g., the Sputnik crisis) and Japan and Germany in the 1980s (e.g., *A Nation at Risk*) (Niemann et al. 2018).

Compared to the limited, problematising use of international knowledge utilisation in the US, policy experts in Korea and Norway utilised international knowledge both more frequently and for different purposes. In Korea, policy experts described that referring to international knowledge and cases has become an institutionalised practice in education policymaking, and the purpose is often to legitimise and justify a policy decision to win the political fight. This interpretation is well-exemplified in the following quote from a Korean policy expert:

When there are ten research projects commissioned for a policy development, at least one of them is a comparative and international study. People often say that education policy is a political outcome. When looking into various policy ideas and proposals, if there is one that absolutely stands out, we could go with that. Even in this case, there is always someone who is winning and someone who is losing. That's why education policy is a political outcome, and because it's political, it's a fight of logics and arguments that are supported by data. Such data could be something like, vertical, historical data based on literature review, or external demand research. Lastly, a horizontal, comparative study on other countries could be important data. [...] [Internal knowledge] is often used to defend a policy proposal once it is settled.

In addition, international knowledge was particularly helpful when policy experts tried to defend a policy concept or practice which had not yet been institutionalised normatively and thus required a greater level of legitimisation. In the case of the 2015 Curriculum Reform, committee members used international knowledge to validate the introduction of competency-based education. A Korean interviewee reflected:

[Internationally produced knowledge] is often used for validation. Although much research has been conducted on competency-based education in Korea for almost a decade, when incorporating competency-based education into the 2015 Curriculum Reform, we received many questions from the field about why. In such cases, we showed

that foreign countries are doing this, and we are in line with the international trend. Like this, we use international knowledge to complement the validity of adventurous policy options.

By contrast, while Korean policy experts highlighted the function of authorisation and legitimisation when making sense of their international knowledge utilisation, Norwegian policy experts put much focus on searching for relevant information that was not available domestically or understanding a greater body of knowledge beyond the national territory. In addition, international references were ways for policy experts to clarify their positioning in the bigger reform space. A Norwegian institute sector researcher stated:

[Norway] produces, from University of Oslo and a few other of the universities, I think, pretty solid work. That's not a problem, but in volume, we would need to pick up the main trends from the US and Europe. [...] I think we pick up the main trends and developments in the international literature and also through international conferences. We think that we need to extend our own knowledge base, what we do in Norway, to see how that fits into the big international trends.

Specifically, a researcher at a university referred to the time when committee members used international knowledge when discussing the definition of bullying: 'There was a lot of discussion on how do we define bullying and that's where we used mostly international or non-national research and academic literature. It's because there was not so much research about it in Norway'.

The difference in the function of international knowledge utilisation between Korea and Norway may be attributed to the different characteristics of the two reforms. On one hand, Korean policy experts faced a greater need for legitimacy to back their proposals and ideas through making references to external sources because the 2015 Curriculum Reform called for fundamental changes in curriculum and assessments. On the other hand, Norwegian policy experts who participated in the development of the incremental 2020

Reform did not confront such pressures and could interpret their utilisation of international knowledge as more functional.

When policy experts in each country utilise knowledge produced outside the country, they often select the ones from their reference societies. Although the reference societies in the US were unclear, they were more evident in Norway and Korea. In both countries, the interview participants pointed to traditional reference societies that share political, cultural, and linguistic similarities, as well as geographical proximity and bilateral relationships. In Norway, the reference societies include the neighbouring Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden. In Korea, the US has been one of the traditional reference societies due to the close political, economic, and military cooperation between the two countries since 1945 when Korea regained its independence from Japan and was temporarily under the control of the US military government. Interestingly, it appeared that new reference societies that were constructed based on ILSA performance, OECD membership, and economic success also emerged. In Korea, for example, Finland rose as one of the major reference societies, since it topped the PISA rankings in early 2000s. Indeed, OECD instruments, including PISA, have influenced how and why national policymakers utilise international knowledge, which is discussed further in the following section.

National Engagements with OECD Policy Instruments

Although policy experts in each country utilised international knowledge to varying degrees and for different purposes, one body of knowledge seemed to play a crucial role in all three countries' policymaking: OECD-produced knowledge. Table 1 shows that knowledge utilisation in the policy process generally depends on domestic organisations such as government agencies, think tanks, advocacy groups, and research institutes. For example, the Department or Ministry of Education was a main producer of knowledge in education

policymaking in all three countries. Besides the government agencies such as the Government Accountability Office and the Printing Office, another group that populated the most cited publisher list for the US included think tanks (e.g., the Education Trust, the Center for American Progress, and the Brookings Institution) and philanthropic foundations (e.g., Carnegie Corporation and Russell Sage Foundation). Similarly, social research institutes such as KICE (Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation) and KEDI (Korean Educational Development Institute) in Korea and NIFU (Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education) and NOVA (Norwegian Social Research) in Norway appeared as prominent knowledge producers. This is consistent with the findings from literature on the influence of think tanks and philanthropic foundations on US policymaking (Au and Lubienski 2016; McDonald 2014; Medvetz 2012) and the increasing role of research institutes in producing application-driven mode 2 knowledge in today's policymaking (Gibbons 2000). Thus, it is important to highlight that despite the strong presence of government agencies and domestic organisations and research institutes, OECD ranked as one of the top 10 publishers of knowledge frequently cited in the policy documents for all three countries. Even in the US where policy actors cited only 13 unique international texts, 11 were published by OECD, and one of the most cited international references was the PISA 2013 results.

[Table 1 about here]

Scholars in comparative education policy have extensively discussed how OECD has become one of the most credible transnational sources of knowledge in global education governance with its attractive knowledge production and effective dissemination (e.g., Gorur 2015; Martens 2007; Sellar and Lingard 2013). For decades, OECD has contributed to the quantification and standardisation in education through its indicators and numbers (Grek 2009). Numerical indicators and measurements not only enable cross-country comparisons

but also allow policymakers to attach their own meanings. Thus, they function as ‘policy instruments’ that connect OECD with national education policymaking and open a policy window (Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007; Ydesen 2019).

A bibliometric analysis of OECD-published knowledge cited in the testimonies and policy reports revealed the three major instruments that contributed to knowledge base in the three countries: Education at a Glance, PISA, and OECD country reviews. In the following subsections, I explore how each instrument was utilised in the three countries and argue that these three instruments are indicative of each country’s level of engagement with external source of information and authority. Education at a Glance allows general yet selective use of external knowledge; PISA has a narrower focus on student learning and performance; and the OECD country reports are produced in direct collaboration between OECD and national governments and address country-specific issues.

Education at a Glance

In 1988, the OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation initiated OECD’s Indicators of Education Systems (INES) Programme in response to the increased demand among OECD countries for comparative data on various education systems. Since then, the INES Programme has developed the framework and methodology for the indicators of key features of national education systems. The now-annual Education at a Glance publishes comparable data for the 38 OECD member countries and 8 non-member countries on the output of educational institutions; the impact of learning; access to education, participation, and progression; the financial resources invested in education; and teachers, the learning environment, and the organisation of schools (OECD 2019). Scholars have noted that Education at a Glance has contributed to making the world calculable, comparable, and predictable (Gorur 2015).

In the expert testimonies and reports examined in this study, Education at a Glance was often referenced as providing data on other countries' education systems for comparison. It appears that Education at a Glance has gained status as a credible and trustworthy source among the experts. A Norwegian expert report boldly stated, '[Education at a Glance] indicators represent a professional consensus on how to describe the current state of education systems internationally' (Norwegian Source Document #1 [NOU 2003: 16], 105).

The utilisation of the indicators to compare 'the current state of education system' across countries has different purposes. The most common purpose observed in the policy documents was problematisation. For example, in a 2012 US congressional hearing, Joel Vargas, vice president for Jobs for the Future, used data from Education at a Glance to establish the need for preparing underserved youth for college.

America's low graduation rates threaten our country's global competitiveness and economic vitality. The United States ranks only 12th among 36 developed nations in college graduation rates, when only a generation ago the United States ranked first. (US Source Document #101 [HRG-2012-HEL-0014], 47)

Vargas pointed to the weakness of the US education system and highlighted potential threats to its economic prosperity by comparing its college graduation rates with other countries and its own performance from a decade ago. This cross-country and cross-time comparison not only scandalises its system but also problematises a policy issue of college readiness.

Overall, Education at a Glance has expanded the boundaries of policy knowledge by producing internationally comparable, standardised data. Education at a Glance's broad range of educational indicators, collected beyond national borders, enabled local policy actors to select the data that was best suited to their interests and needs. Not too long after the first publication of the Education at a Glance series, national policy actors found another, but this time more learning- and performance-focused, policy instrument: PISA.

PISA

PISA is a triennial international large-scale assessment that is designed to assess 15-year-old students' skills and knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science across the world. It has been studied as the central mechanism of global education governance because it standardises and measures educational outcomes and encourages comparison by presenting the findings in a variety of ranking tables and figures. The mechanism of global education governance not only has an infrastructural but also an epistemological and discursive influence on education policy and practice (Addey 2017; Lewis 2018; Lingard, Sellar, and Savage 2014).

In all three countries, policy experts commonly utilised PISA results for scandalisation and problematisation. For example, Linda Darling-Hammond's testimony at a US congressional hearing in 2007 shows how national policy actors use PISA to discuss what needs to be taught and measured:

It is worth noting that PISA assessments focus explicitly on 21st century skills, going beyond the question posed by most US standardized tests, "Did students learn what we taught them?" to ask, "What can students do with what they have learned?" PISA defines literacy in mathematics, science, and reading as students' abilities to apply what they know to new problems and situations. This is the kind of higher-order learning that is increasingly emphasized in other nations' assessment systems, but often discouraged by the multiple-choice tests most states have adopted under the first authorisation of No Child Left Behind. (US Source Document #45 [HRG-2007-EDL-0054], 29)

This problematising use is similar to how policy experts used the indicators of Education at a Glance. Considering that policy experts needed knowledge to argue for policy change, it may not be surprising that they seldom used PISA results to glorify their education systems. The following quote demonstrates how policy experts used PISA results to problematise Korean students' learning experience:

The overall findings of comparative studies of PISA and TIMSS⁶ results show that [Korean] students, consistent with two decades ago, experience too much pressure and anxiety toward learning Math and Science, spend too much time studying, have a great level of stress, are exposed to competitiveness, have less interest and confidence in learning, are not self-motivated, and do not value subject matters much. (Korean Source Document #1, 3-4)

The analysis of the policy documents showed that PISA results served as an external source of authority for policy experts to legitimise their identification of educational problems through comparison across time and place.

OECD Country Reviews

In addition to Education at a Glance and PISA, the country review reports from the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes project (hereafter the OECD Review project) deserves special attention. The Norwegian expert reports frequently cited several country review reports from the OECD Review project, and combining all references to each report belonging to the project, the total number even exceeded those of Education at a Glance and PISA.

This project was initiated in 2009 by the OECD Education Policy Committee to ‘provide analysis and policy advice to countries on how evaluation and assessment arrangements can be embedded within a consistent framework that can bring about real gains in performance across the school system’ (OECD 2013, 3). For the first comprehensive report published in 2013, ‘Synergies for Better Learning’, 26 systems in 25 countries participated and 15 of the 26 opted for a country review. Since 2013, four more country reviews have

⁶ The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international large-scale assessment, administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

been published (Romania in 2017; North Macedonia, Turkey, and Georgia in 2019).

Although the US did not participate in the project, both Korea and Norway did, and Norway also participated in the country review, which reflects each country's level of engagement with external bodies of expertise.

The country review intends to provide, 'from an international perspective, an independent analysis of major issues facing the evaluation and assessment framework in [each country], current policy initiatives, and possible future approaches' (OECD 2011, 3). Each country review is conducted by an external expert team consisting of a maximum of five members (including at least two from the OECD Secretariat). The external review visits the country to conduct a detailed case study. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training contributed to the review by providing a comprehensive Country Background Report on Norwegian contexts for evaluation and assessment.

Utilisation of country review reports was active in Norway not only because Norway was one of the first 15 systems to participate in the country review, but also because its neighbours, Denmark and Sweden, opted for the country review. The bibliometric analysis shows that the NOU papers made references to the comparative report 'Synergies for Better Learning' and the country review reports of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. When examining the actual use of the references in the text, the OECD Review reports were mainly cited to justify the committee's policy options in reference to the findings and recommendations from the OECD review project:

In the OECD's review of various countries' quality assessment systems in 2011, one of the recommendations to both Norway and Sweden was that external assessment (national supervision or inspection) should to a greater extent be based on the internal assessment and take a clearer basis in the teaching and practice of schools. (Norwegian Source Document #3 [NOU 2014: 7], 109)

OECD country reports were also used to emphasise that the policy problem the committee

wanted to address was in line with the international trend. The experts often attempted to make their problem identification credible by referring to the country reports of Sweden and Denmark, to highlight that Norway's problem was not only Norwegian, but regional, calling for a greater need for policy change.

Similar to Norway, the other Nordic countries have long traditions for internal assessment of the school's practice and goal achievement. Although there has been a positive development in recent years, Norway, Sweden and Denmark face challenges with the quality and systematics of the schools' self-assessment processes. (Norwegian Source Document #3 [NOU 2014: 7], 109)

Where the country reports differ from the two previously discussed instruments is that they directly address the country-specific contexts. While Education at a Glance and PISA results are not targeted for a country and have a broad range of indicators and numbers to which national policy actors can attach their own meanings, the country reviews discuss a particular topic in a particular context, resulting in a more finely grained utilisation. Furthermore, because the country reviews invited external experts to conduct a case study on a national educational system in collaboration with local policy experts, the content of the reports are more deeply integrated into the national policy discourse. Arguably, each country's utilisation of different OECD policy instruments reflects its attitude and levels of engagement with an external source of authority and information. While the US seemed to engage only with the general data such as Education at a Glance and PISA that allow more autonomous use of knowledge on national policy expert's end, Korea participated in an international project that needed a closer examination of its system on a particular topic, and Norway even went further by inviting OECD to conduct a country-specific review of its system.

Conclusions: Internalising Externalisation

This study investigates how and why policy actors utilise international knowledge for the development of an education reform in the US, Korea, and Norway. The results showed that national policy experts mobilised international knowledge differently in terms of frequency, function, and level of engagement. Table 2 summarises the patterns of international knowledge utilisation discussed in this article.

[Table 2 about here]

The national differences in how national policy experts externalised to international knowledge can be discussed by three major contextual dimensions discussed in previous literature (e.g., Dunlop and Radaelli 2013; Jenkins-Smith 1990; Radaelli and Dente 1996). The first dimension is problem tractability, the extent to which a policy problem can be resolved with existing knowledge. When the problem is highly tractable, knowledge utilisation follows a routinised pattern. However, when the problem cannot be addressed by available knowledge, the increased technical uncertainty motivates the policymakers to seek knowledge from external sources (Haas 1992). This was demonstrated in the case of Norway, where policy experts explained that their utilisation of international knowledge was to search for relevant and innovative information that was not available domestically in order to address technical uncertainty.

The second dimension is the level of conflict, which indicates how policy values and goals are polarised among policy actors (Radaelli and Dente 1996). When the level of conflict in the policy arena is high, policymakers are likely to use knowledge strategically to advance their own agenda. In such cases, policy actors often draw on an external body of knowledge which is not produced by internal policy actors and thus considered to be neutral to legitimatise their policy plans. In Korea, policy experts made references to foreign cases and international trends to justify the adoption of the competency education in the 2015

Curriculum Reform. Unlike the Renewal and Improvement Reform in Norway that made incremental changes to the 2006 reform, the 2015 Curriculum Reform in Korea called for a paradigm shift to ‘happy education’. In this reform context in which policy makers faced greater needs for legitimisation and coalition building, it makes sense that they relied on international knowledge for source of validation and authorisation.

The third dimension includes the certification of actors (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013; Dunlop 2014). The degree of certification measures the extent to which there is a group of experts who provide credible and valid knowledge (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013). Policy actors would be more likely to reference international knowledge from the producers who are socially perceived as credible and legitimate. For example, despite the different level of openness and reception toward external knowledge in each system, OECD-produced knowledge appeared to have been successfully integrated into the policymaking in all three countries. Even in the US where only two percent of all references were internationally produced, most of the few international references were published by OECD. The high receptiveness toward OECD-produced knowledge is particularly interesting because, unlike a few other intergovernmental organisations, OECD does not have either legal instruments or financial influences over its member states (Grek 2009). Martens (2007) finds the reason in the ‘comparative turn’ that OECD took in the late 1980s, ‘a scientific approach to political decision making’ (Martens 2007, 42), producing a large number of statistics, reports, studies, and tests. This study showed how such policy instruments as Education at a Glance, PISA, and the country review reports, which contributed to OECD’s status as a transnational source of authority and credibility, were used in national contexts. Scholars have argued that the increased influence of OECD instruments in national policymaking may result in changes in countries’ reference societies (e.g., Santos and Centeno 2021). The reference societies are now shaped not only by political and cultural similarities, geographical distance, and bilateral

relationships, but also, if not more importantly, by OECD membership and PISA performance.

By situating each country's use of international knowledge in the context of policy knowledge utilisation, this study demonstrates that each country 'internalises' the act of externalisation in its own way. The findings suggest that national policy experts learned when and how to externalise to international knowledge, made sense of the functions, and undertook the practices of externalisation as part of education policymaking. In Korea, policy experts accepted that making references to external systems or to global ideas has been institutionalised in the policy process. International knowledge remains as an external source of legitimacy; however, the act of referencing external knowledge has been integrated into the internal policy process. Like Korea, in Norway, policy experts viewed externalisation as a legitimate act to seek policy knowledge, to the extent that the line between external and internal sources of expertise has become blurry. As demonstrated in the OECD country review, the Norwegian government directly sought policy consultation from OECD by inviting the external experts to evaluate its system. Indeed, OECD has now become one of the major external organisations for national governments to outsource its expertise. National policy actors attempt to address the legitimacy crisis of expertise by directly seeking policy consultation from OECD or turning to knowledge produced by OECD. Interestingly, while OECD drives the quantification and standardisation of educational achievement through its policy instruments, it foregrounds uncertainty in education. Using standardised measures, it promotes rather uncertain educational values such as '21st century skills' and 'competency-based education'. Ironically, to achieve these values, an increasing number of countries consult OECD on education policies and practices. To varying degrees, seeking external expertise from international organisations is becoming part of the national expertise-seeking arrangement.

However, policy experts' utilisation of international knowledge remains situational. Different combinations of the three dimensions of knowledge utilisation account for variance of externalisation within and across countries. National policy experts may negotiate their definition and application around externalisation in a particular policy setting and adjust to different circumstances. In the federal system of the US, national policy experts carried the 'irrelevant' image toward international knowledge in education policymaking and prioritised externalisation to interstate knowledge. Nevertheless, they willingly drew on international knowledge when they needed to construct the crisis narrative by comparing its system to other global competitors and the producer of knowledge held a prominent level of legitimacy such as OECD.

Many scholars who apply the concept of externalisation in comparative policy studies have defined internalisation as the process in which imported policies and practices are 'indigenised' in local contexts through replacement, hybridisation, and reinforcement of existing structures (Phillips and Ochs 2003; Steiner-Khamsi 2004). However, what this study draws attention to is how the act of externalisation itself has been internalised in the national policymaking process, specifically in the national expertise-seeking arrangements. Furthermore, it highlights the blurred distinction between the external and internal in today's policymaking space where knowledge is produced in collaboration between national and international experts, global knowledge is translated as local, and local knowledge is repackaged as global.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Most Frequently Cited Publishers

No	Publishers					
	United States	Count	Korea	Count	Norway	Count
1	US Department of Education	28	KICE	110	Universitetsforlaget	59
2	US Government Accountability Office	18	Ministry of Education ^a	37	Taylor & Francis	58
3	Education Week	17	KEDI	37	Ministry of Education and Research ^b	56
4	Harvard University	16	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology ^a	31	Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training	52
5	Education Trust / OECD	12	The Korean Society For Curriculum Studies	14	Ministry of Church Affairs, Education and Research ^b	47
6			Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	13	OECD	42
7	Center for American Progress	11	National Academies Press	8	SSB (Statistics Norway)	34

8	National Academies Press	9	Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development ^a	8	Wiley	33
9	US Government Printing Office	8	Corwin Press	6	NIFU (Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education)	32
10	Brookings Institute / Carnegie Corporation / Russell Sage Foundation	6	OECD / England Department of Education / Kyoyookbook	5	NOVA (Norwegian Social Research)	30

^a. These names refer to the ministry that is responsible for educational affairs in Korea. The name has changed over time.

^b. These names refer to the ministry that is responsible for educational affairs in Norway. The name has changed over time.

Table 2. Utilisation of International Knowledge

	United States	Korea	Norway
Frequency	Low	High	High
Function	Problematisation	Legitimation	Innovation
Level of Engagement	Low	Medium	High

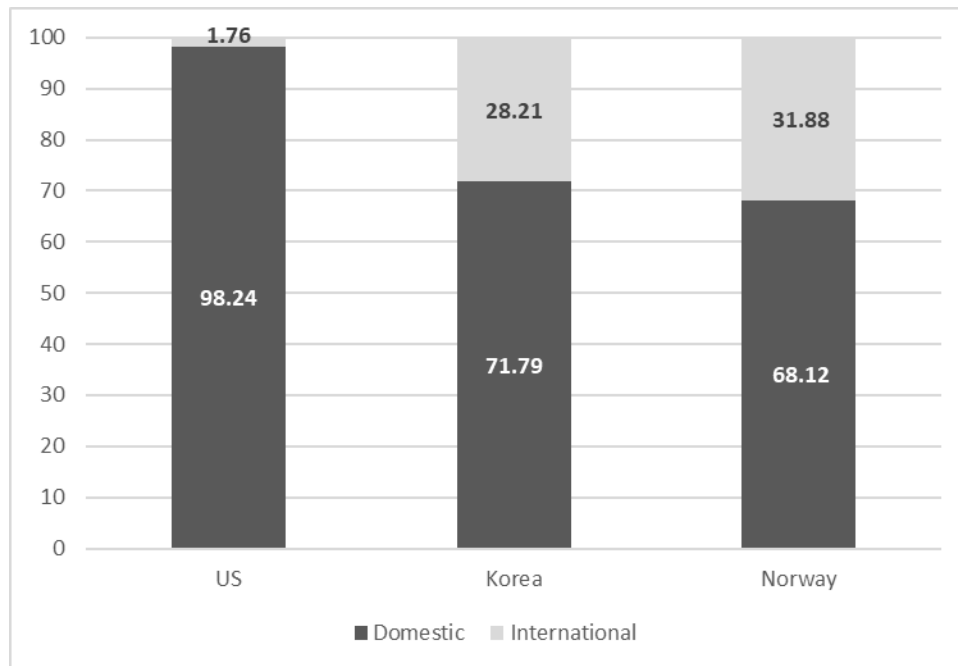


Figure 1. Distribution of references, by location.