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Researching the habitus of global policy actors in education

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This paper reprises the argument for the emergence of a global education policy field and then focuses on the shared habitus of global and national policy actors and technicians. We argue that this shared habitus is constituted as a reflection of and a contribution to the creation of the global education policy field. We use Bourdieu's approach to habitus as both methodological tool and concept and argue the significance of the interview encounter to understanding habitus. We also draw on the content of interviews with five elite policy makers and technicians. We found the policy actors and technicians shared a similar *middle class* embodied habitus; in terms of schemes of perception, they identified with a *high-modernist* confidence in both science and technology; they identified with a *cosmopolitan* outlook and sensibility; and demonstrated *scientistic* approaches that held real confidence in understanding the social through quantitative social science methods.

Keywords: policy habitus; global education policy field; cosmopolitan; global policy actors; commensurative work

Globalisation takes place only in capital and data. (Gayatri Spivak, 2012, p. 1)
The globe is on our computers….No one lives there (Gayatri Spivak, 2012, p. 338)

Introduction

Much has been written about globalisation and education policy (e.g. Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; Ball, 2012) and about the constitution of a global education policy field (Lingard and Rawolle, 2011). This analysis often focuses on globalised education policy discourses and their impacts in various national schooling systems across the globe, resulting in what Stronach (2009) refers to as discursive convergence through 'hypernarratives' that 'constitute the first global language of Education' (p.1). However, these global discourses are always

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vernacularized in particular ways in given national schooling systems, mediated by local histories, cultures and politics.

In the globalisation and education policy literature, there has been little focus on the policy actors – or agents to use Bourdieu's term – who have worked to establish and enable an emergent global education policy field. We would suggest that policy actors in international organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank, along with those in nations, through aligned habitus and practices, help constitute this field. Sklair (2001), referring to various fractions of what he calls the 'transnational capitalist class', notes that 'Globalisation is driven by identifiable actors working through institutions they own and/or control' (p. 1). Sklair (2001) sees four fractions of this transnational capitalist class, namely: 'Transnational capitalist executives and their local affiliates'; 'globalizing bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction)'; 'globalizing professionals (the technical fraction)'; and 'merchants and media (the consumerist fraction)' (p. 7).

This paper focuses on 'globalising bureaucrats' and 'globalising professionals', recognising that the 'globe' is on their computers and in the data infrastructures that help to constitute global spaces of commensuration and comparison, as suggested by Spivak in the quotes above. We focus specifically on bureaucrats and professionals in two international organisations and two different national education organisations in England and in Australia, although we see these elite policy makers as hybrid mixes of Sklair's global bureaucrats/professionals. We talk of global policy makers and global policy technicians instead of bureaucrats and professionals. We draw on interview data with five elite policy actors in these organisations, although the analysis is informed by an extensive data set comprising 50 interviews with policy actors of different kinds at multiple scales. The five policy actors we focus on include three whom we might primarily see as 'globalising bureaucrats' and two who we see as primarily 'globalising professionals'. Ball (2010) notes

that with categorisations of this kind, 'we have to acknowledge the diversity of social and economic groups it encompasses, its fluidity, and the fuzziness of its boundaries' (p. 141). We take account here as well of Connell's (1977) distinction between these categorical accounts of class structure as opposed to generative ones that give greater emphasis to historical emergence and practices (pp. 4-5). We will argue that the actual categories we found with our interviewees were more hybrid than suggested by Sklair. Ball (2010) makes the point that classes are not only about structures, but also importantly about culture, lifestyles and identities. He speaks about the 'cosmopolitan sensibilities' of the global middle class who most often live in global cities. We see such sensibilities as an element of the habitus of this global middle class, and in our cases as part of the habitus of elite global policy actors in education.

Sklair (2001) observes that all fractions of the transnational capitalist class possess 'outwardly-oriented global rather than inwardly-oriented local perspectives on most economic, political, and cultural-ideological issues' (p. 20)[†]. We might say that this group possess cosmopolitan sensibilities that prioritise outwardly-oriented global perspectives as a frame for understanding the national/local. For Beck (2006), cosmopolitanism refers to processes 'in which the universal and particular, the similar and the dissimilar, the global and the local are to be conceived, not as cultural polarities, but as interconnected and reciprocally interpenetrating principles' (pp. 72-73). We see such interconnection in the sensibilities of our interviewees, although with a prioritising of the universal and the global.

While Reay (2004) has argued that habitus has been too loosely used in much educational research, we would argue that there has been neglect in policy sociology in education of the habitus of policy actors. We argue that a shared habitus is constituted as a

[†] *The Financial Times* newspaper targets members of the transnational global capitalist class as their demographic.

reflection of and a contribution to the global field of education policy and its logics of practice. As noted, we are interested in two fractions of these elite policy makers: namely senior policy makers and policy technicians with expertise in the development of metrics, test construction, statistics and data analysis. This class of global policy actors constitute a global epistemic community (Kallo, 2009), whose epistemological presuppositions, we will demonstrate, allow for the universal and thus global application of policy as numbers across the specificities of national cultures and politics.

We begin by considering the emergence of a global education policy field. This is followed by a methodological reflection on Bourdieu and an account of our approach to habitus as both methodological tool and concept (Wacquant, 2011, 2014). We also point out how we utilise the experience of conducting interviews *as* data, acknowledging Alvesson's (2011) point that the interview encounter is a 'socially and linguistically complex situation' (p. 4) that warrants analytical attention in its own right. We also consider research using habitus and the use of habitus for research. We then move to the core analytical section of the paper, considering the habitus and practices of global policy makers and technicians. We provide a summative conclusion on our invoking of Bourdieu on the habitus of global policy actors in education.

The global education policy field

We have written about a global education policy field and its emergence following the end of the Cold War (e.g. Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor, 2005; Lingard and Rawolle, 2011; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; Sellar and Lingard, 2013b) and will only briefly reprise the argument here. The concept is derived from the theoretical work of Bourdieu, particularly his concept of 'field'. Bourdieu, in attempting to work across Weber, Durkheim and Marx, saw the social arrangement or structure as consisting of multiple fields, each with its specific logics of

practice, and each overarched by a meta-field of power. Fields are to varying degrees autonomous or heteronomous, from the field of power and other fields, and are spaces of contestation. The degree of autonomy or heteronomy of any given field relates to the extent that the field is able to resist colonisation by the logics of other fields. The relationships between fields might be seen to function through what have been called 'cross-field' effects of various kinds (Lingard and Rawolle, 2004). The powerful in any given field also have access to the capitals (material, symbolic and cultural) that are powerful currency within the field.

For Bourdieu's, the concept of institutions is replaced with that of field and so instead of education policy, he would speak of the *field* of education policy. Until quite recently, most usages of Bourdieu's concept of field took the nation as the site of the social in which various fields were located. However, we note that Bourdieu's concept of field describes a social space, rather than a geographical one, and thus today needs to be stretched to take in a construction of the social that is global in character: thus a global education policy field. Just as Bourdieu (2003) argued that the global economy was constructed as a field by agents, so too has the global education policy field been constructed. Bourdieu (2003) wrote indicatively about a global economic field and also about how the strength of 'national capital' was a factor in the mediation of the logics of practice of this field within national fields. Bourdieu also rejected 'methodological nationalism' within his work.

We have drawn heavily on the research of historians and sociologists of statistics (e.g. Porter, 1995; Hacking, 1990; Desroisieres, 1998; Rose, 1999) and argued analogously that the OECD's *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) (and other measures, such as the alignment of statistical categories across various international and national agencies) has constituted the globe as a commensurate space of measurement, just as the

emergence of national systems of statistics helped constitute nations by creating the national territory as a commensurate space of measurement. Here we see numbers, in both national and global fields, as an important technology of distance and governance, particularly in the era of comparison as a mode of governance (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal, 2003). We have also argued, drawing on Woodward (2009), that the OECD is involved in various modes of global governance today within the global education policy field. Important here is the notion of 'epistemological governance' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013a), which describes the alignment of values and schemes of perception among policy actors.

Methodological reflections

We invoke Bourdieu's thinking tools (habitus, capitals, field) to understand the work of policy actors in enabling the global education policy field. Following Wacquant (2011), we use habitus as a concept and as a methodological tool. We also note the relational character of Bourdieu's theorising: these concepts sit in synergistic relationships with each other. Habitus is a dispositional theory of practice, suggesting an important relationality between habitus and field; alignments between habitus and field see the practices of agents as manifesting a 'feel for the game' and an intimate understanding of the logics of practice of the field. Like Bourdieu (1999), we also see research as 'fieldwork in philosophy', acknowledging that all research is always simultaneously empirical and theoretical from the outset and necessarily reflexive in character. Bourdieu explicitly rejects both 'theoreticism' and 'empiricism', arguing instead for the necessary imbrication of the two at all stages of research.

We need to make a methodological statement concerning the interview and other data at the centre of our analysis. This analysis is applied *post hoc* to data that were not collected for the purposes of researching the habitus of policy actors in national and international educational organisations. Following a number of interviews, we found different social dynamics and

patterns in and across the interviews. After interviews were completed, we started to reflect on the habitus of the policy makers and their relationships with us as interviewers. We began to see how an analysis of the habitus of these policy makers might help us understand the emergence of a global education policy field. Within the social sciences there has been recent methodological interest in the significance of these interview dynamics and dispositional matters as data additional to the content of interview conversations. Alvesson (2011), for example, stresses the discourses that position interviewees and the identity work that goes on in research interviews. Bourdieu (1999) has also written most insightfully about how the capitals (and habitus) of the interviewer and interviewee are important elements of the relationship at the core of the interview situation. In this paper we are using data derived from interviews *and* reflections on the actual nature of the social interaction in the interview situation to understand the habitus of global policy actors.

Jenkins (2002) argues that one of the most significant contributions of Bourdieu's *oeuvre* to the social sciences has been a methodological one, particularly his treatment of epistemology as a practical matter. Bourdieu (1999), in writing about the collection and analysis of interview data as a postscript to *The Weight of the World*, notes that,

> True submission to the data requires an act of construction based on practical mastery of the social logic by which these data are constructed. For example, one cannot properly hear what is being said in the apparently quite banal conversation between three secondary school students…unless one avoids reducing the three young girls to the first names which stand for them, as in so many 'tape recorder sociologies', and knows how to read in their words the structure of objective relations, present and past, between their trajectory and the educational establishments they attended, and through this, the whole structure and history of the teaching system expressed there. (pp. 617-618)

We have attempted in our analysis of elite policy actors' habitus to abide by Bourdieu's (1999) observation that 'true submission to the data' demands 'practical mastery of the social logic by which these data are constructed' (pp. 617-618). We also agree with Bourdieu's

(1999) critique of ‘tape recorder sociologies’ and recognise the necessity of interrogating interview transcripts in ways that constitute them as data and expressions of interviewee habitus and positioning within various fields. This is an acknowledgement of Bourdieu’s argument that we must reject ‘epistemological innocence’, which demands that we acknowledge that all data collection and analysis are constructions and that, in recognising and acknowledging this in our research work, we do better social science (p. 608).

In the research interviews that inform this paper we felt the significance of the disposition/position, habitus and field location, and possessed capitals of the interviewees. The practical negotiation of the social dynamic in the interview encounter by both the interviewer and interviewee registers as a form of embodied data that mediates and modulates the content of what is said and what is not. Our acknowledgement of how important these social dynamics were in our interviews, as data, led us to see the significance of the habitus of the interviewees to the policy fields in which they were located. We came to recognise the similarities (and differences) of the habitus of the global policy makers and global policy technicians across scales of policy making in contemporary education, as well as the similarities of habitus of each.

Research using habitus

Next we address the theoretical understandings and methodological applications of habitus, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s work (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), but also on more recent work by Loic Wacquant (2011, 2014). Wacquant actually speaks of habitus as tool and topic, as both ‘method of inquiry’ and ‘empirical object’ (2014, p. 5), an approach we adopt.

The concept of habitus has been critiqued in regard to its ambiguity (Crossley, 2013), overusage (Reay, 2004) and perceived latent determinism (Connell, 1983; Reay, 2004).

Another common critique has been that the concept is something of a theoretical 'black box', an empty signifier, used to explain the structure (field) and agency (practice) relationship (Jenkins, 2002). However, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that habitus is not 'fate' or a 'social destiny', but rather a product of history that is constantly subjected and affected by experiences which thereby make habitus an 'open system of dispositions' (p. 133). Wacquant (2014) argues that habitus is used by Bourdieu to explain social disruption and change, as much as social reproduction. In rejecting the argument that Bourdieu's theorising is only about understanding social reproduction (e.g. Connell, 1983), rather than change, Wacquant (2014) notes that habitus as a dispositional theory of action never necessarily results in a specific practices; rather:

> …it takes the *conjunction of disposition and position*, subjective capacity and objective possibility, habitus and social space (or field) to produce a given conduct or expression. And this meeting between skilled agent and pregnant world spawns the gamut from felicitous to strained, smooth to rough, fertile to futile. (p. 5)

Primary habitus is produced through socialisation within the home (implicit pedagogy) through 'familial osmosis and familiar immersion' (Wacquant, 2014, p. 7). *Secondary* habitus is grafted onto the primary habitus through education and both implicit and explicit pedagogies. According to Wacquant (2014), this is indicative of the malleability of habitus (p. 7), which is rent by lack of internal integration and tensions across the primary and secondary habitus. Habitus can thus be seen as a mediating concept, rather than a determining one (Harker, 1984).

Bourdieu (1990a) defends critiques of habitus as deterministic, suggesting that habitus 'realizes itself' in relation to a field, and as such, the same habitus may result in different practices, depending on the state of the field (p. 116). McLeod (2005) adds that habitus can be understood as 'socialised subjectivity', where these dispositions and 'embodied ways of

being' are formed through interaction with the social field (p. 13), while Shilling (2004) suggests habitus can be understood as 'situated action', thereby constructing a 'relationship between the body, social fields and capital' (p. 474). Wacquant (2011) notes that the concept of habitus 'proposes that human agents are historical animals who carry within their bodies acquired sensibilities and categories that are the sedimented product of their past experiences' (p. 82). Here we might see the body as a 'mnemonic device' on which experience is 'imprinted and coded' as habitus (Jenkins, 2002, pp. 75-76). For Bourdieu (1993) then, 'The socialized body (what is called the individual or the person) is not opposed to society: it is one of its forms of existence' (p. 15). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) elaborate on the relationality between habitus, the field and capital:

> A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action. (p. 16)

In working towards a definition of habitus, Bourdieu (1990a) suggests that:

> A system of dispositions [habitus] to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted … this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances. (p. 77)

The system of dispositions that influences or regulates modes of practice and behaviours is 'acquired through experience' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 9), and is therefore located within an historical context and linked to an 'individual history' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86). We might come to understand habitus through a 'socioanalysis' that locates individual biographies within social structures (consisting of multiple fields, overarched by the field of power) through time. That is,

> The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history … It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. A present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 54)

Consequently, it could be said that the habitus of elite policy actors is 'variable from place to place and time to time' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 9). While this habitus provides the actors in the field with the feel for the game, it also enables an 'infinite number of "moves" to be made, adapted to the infinite number of possible situations which no rule, however complex, can foresee' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 9). This makes habitus a 'powerfully generative' of practice, capable of reproducing, but also transforming, the social condition (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 87).

Using habitus for research

Wacquant (2011) suggests there are three ways to research habitus (p. 6). The first is '*synchronic and inductive*', requiring the mapping of 'preferences, expressions, and social strategies' across various activities and fields. The second is '*diachronic and deductive*', focusing on dispositions over time. The third approach is '*experimental*' and demands a concentration on the 'focused pedagogical programs' that seek to constitute a 'specific habitus' by submitting to these programs (p. 6). Wacquant's (2004) own research on the habitus of boxers, where he sought to become a boxer himself, is an example of this experimental method for researching habitus. Here we focus on the synchronic and inductive approaches, drawing on research interviews, our interactions with elite policy actors as social relationships, and the time we spent in their institutions. There is also a minor element of the experimental in our approach: we have engaged with policy elites in various national and international organisations over time, including in a participant role for one of us. This engagement includes, *inter alia*, some of the organisations dealt with in this study. Further, it

is through our embodied presence as researchers within interview encounters, conducted within specific institutional spaces, that we detected the preferences, expressions and strategies of policy actors.

Bourdieu observed habitus as embodied practices, for example, ‘a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking’ (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990b, p. 70). Crossley (2013) suggests the act of walking may convey a person’s competency in performing this act, or the mood of the person who is walking. Dumais (2002) adds that as well as the physical demeanour associated with walking, the way a person walks or carries themselves can also identify the presumed status or prestige the person may associate with their position in an organisation or within a social structure. Habitus can also be a ‘classificatory scheme’ that identifies divisions or symbolic differences that constitute a ‘veritable language’ (Bourdieu, 1998). The habitus of elite policy actors may promote or reinforce particular behaviours such as the drive to succeed (Harker, 1984), a tendency towards abstraction (Nash, 1999), intervention (McDonough, 2006), or measurement (Lingard, 2011). By exploring habitus through embodied practices and actions, Bourdieu (1988) suggests that he was able to analyse the ‘experience of social agents’, as well as the ‘objective structures’ that enabled such experiences (p. 782).

The above examples link habitus to capital (Bourdieu, 1993) and as such, habitus is ‘the way a culture [as relative positional power] is embodied in the individual’ (Harker, 1984, p. 118). Consequently, using habitus as a methodological tool is a way of ‘analysing the dominance of dominant groups’ (Reay, 2004, p. 436) in fields where the culture of dominant groups is embodied and where these groups control economic and socio-political resources.

The habitus of policy actors in the global field

This paper is informed by fifty semi-structured interviews with elite education policy actors in influential international and national organisations. The specific data that constitute

the basis of the analysis proffered here are drawn from two sources: (1) reflections on the conduct of the actual interviews *in situ* and (2) transcripts of interviews with a select group of five interviewees. Most interviews were conducted jointly by two of the paper's authors and after these interviews we often recorded reflections on the interview, accepting the proposition that data analysis begins at the moment of data collection. We also considered where the interview was conducted and the nature of the relationship with us as the interviewers and the position of the interviewees within their organisations and within the global education policy field. We have sought to use the words and framing discourses (Alvesson, 2011) in the interview data as a way of thinking about the habitus of the interviewees. Because we are concerned with a general argument about the habitus of global policy actors in education, we have anonymised their identities and their organisations. There are also ethical considerations here insofar as this *post hoc* analysis was not an explicit purpose for data collection.

Our research demonstrated fuzziness between the categories of global policy makers and global policy technicians (see Table 1). All of the 50 people interviewed were highly educated, many with PhDs and most with at least a Masters degree, and to this extent were all 'professionals' in terms of possessing expertise in relation to education policy. All were also situated within a similar epistemic community to us as interviewers. A distinguishing point here, though, was that the global policy makers and technicians deal more with research *for* policy as opposed to more critically-oriented academic research *of* policy, to utilise Gordon et al.'s (1977) useful, but oversimplified binary. Through a 'cognitive/instrumental process', these global policy actors bring research knowledge in to contact with state knowledge in response to policy problems (van Zanten, 2006, p. 260).

Three of the research participants can be seen as primarily policy makers; two worked mainly in a national field (NAT Policy Maker & NAT/INT Policy Maker), while one had an

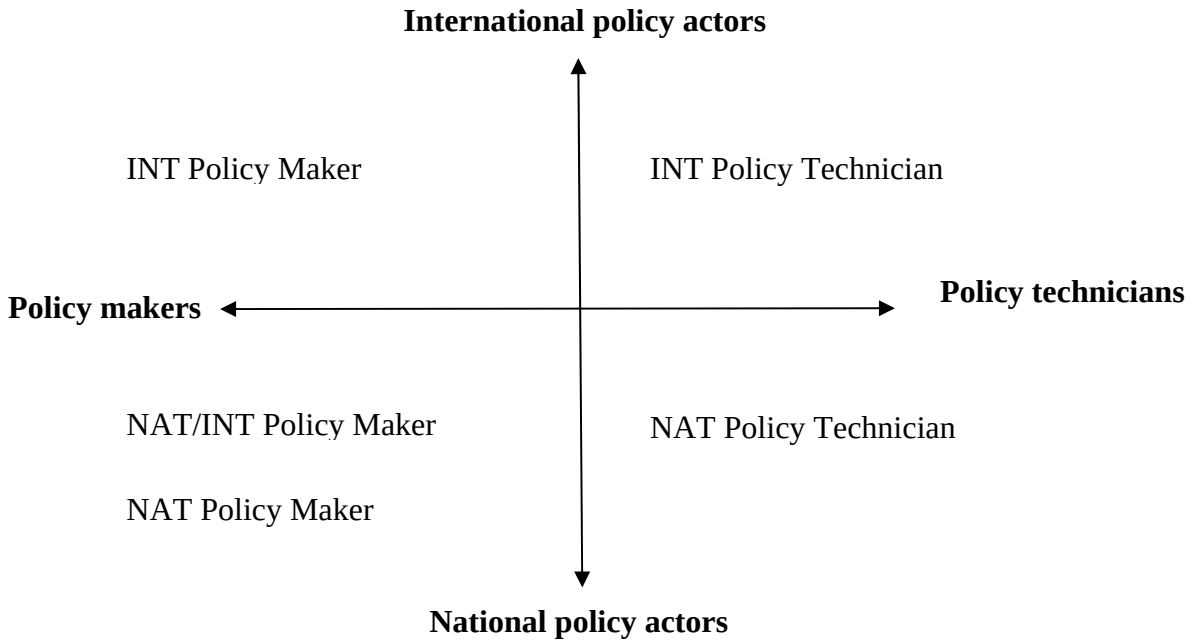
influential role within an international organisations and was more a global policy maker given the positioning of their organisation and their policy making role (INT Policy Maker). Of the two primarily national policy makers, one was more straightforwardly a global policy maker, and their lengthy public sector experience in the area of educational data and policy meant that they had deep professional expertise and knowledge in these domains. This policy maker was influential in both a national policy field where they were physically located and within the global field where they also had an influential role in an international organisation (NAT/INT Policy Maker). The third of these policy makers had been a senior academic but had moved into a national bureaucratic role (NAT Policy Maker).

The other two participants were policy technicians who can be seen as more global professionals than global bureaucrats. This was the case for INT Policy Technician, given the more academic positioning of their international organisation within the global field. The other policy technician (NAT Policy Technician) handled test construction and statistical analyses, rather than providing organisational leadership or having a major policy making role. This participant, who was representative of other global professionals interviewed, saw policy, and particularly the political context of their work, as having negative consequences for them and disaffecting what they were trying to do. The participant who fitted this category (NAT Policy technician) saw an affinity with us as academics, while the global policy makers, to varying degrees, lived in and had to manage the space of the political, while also drawing on their professional knowledge and expertise.

We analyse dispositions that constitute the habitus of the five selected participants according to four groupings that emerged from our reflections on the interview encounters and our reading of the transcripts. Each grouping —middle class, high-modernist, cosmopolitan and scientistic—describes qualities that can be detected in the habitus of each member of this group. However, it is important to keep in mind that habitus is always a

complex composite of these dispositions and, while we can see affinities across this group, the particular composition of these dispositions varies depending on structural and institutional positions of each participant within the global policy field.

Table 1: Location of five policy actors in the global policy field



Middle class

In focusing here on middle class dispositions, we are dealing with habitus as embodied and manifest in durable ways of speaking and relating to others. All of the participants displayed elements of what we might call middle class dispositions, aligned to varying extents with the habitus of the interviewers and manifesting the requisite cultural capital of the educated middle class. Those who were policy makers with leadership positions, whether in international or national organisations, also dressed in a very formal way: the men in suits and ties and the woman in formal professional dress. The policy technicians were less formal in their dress, which often exhibited a more academic style. Middle class habitus was also on display during informal conversations that immediately preceded and followed the formal interviews. However, middle class habitus of the participants manifest differently depending

on their location in the field.

The location of the interviews was also important and affected the nature of the social encounter (Alvesson, 2011, p. 81). Interviews with NAT Policy Maker and INT Policy Maker were conducted in their offices and all the institutional power came to bear in the interview encounter. INT Policy Maker was located in an organisation with a powerful policy position and was more directive, almost proselytising about the role of the organisation in the global education policy field. NAT/INT Policy Maker and INT Policy Technician were interviewed over coffee in public spaces, while NAT Policy Technician was interviewed in a common meeting space within their organisation. The spaces of these encounters were more informal and this was reflected at the level of the discussion and in the interview relationship.

As academics, we were positioned in different ways in respect of the conduct of the interviews. The policy makers used more 'magisterial discourse', particularly INT Policy Maker. They were more framed by policy and political discourses, but also told us a policy story or narrative, at times trying to convince us of an argument. This was particularly the case with two of the more bureaucratic participants: INT Policy Maker and NAT Policy Maker. In contrast, the global policy technician spoke with us more as if sharing an academic-oriented perspective, but academics with different theoretical and methodological frameworks. Here NAT Policy Technician observed: 'I am a cognitive psychologist by training, but I have always maintained the interest in measurement aspects of statistics. So after my PhD, I moved to psychometrics'. NAT Policy Technician also sought our advice about other academics with quantitative analytical capacity working in the field.

High-modernist

While habitus is embodied as evidenced in ways of walking, standing, addressing people and so on, it also consists, as Bourdieu argues, of 'schemes of perception' and 'thought'. These

schemes produce both individual and collective practices. In documenting the next three elements of what we have called the policy habitus, we are dealing with what we found to be central to these schemes of thought of policy makers and technicians in the global education policy field.

The habitus of all interviewees manifested an Enlightenment sensibility that shaped their schemes of perception and thought. A high-modernist confidence in science and technology was evident with both the policy makers and the policy technicians and led to a confidence in possibilities for improving testing and its usefulness for both policy makers and teachers. We see this high-modernist confidence in the policy actors' acceptance of 'the human capacity to reason', 'the intelligibility of the world', including the social world, and 'its amenability to human reason' (Wagner 2012, p.4). There was very little epistemological or ontological doubt expressed in the interviews, very little engagement with or acknowledgement of the 'post' literatures that have destabilised to some extent modernist certainties. Thus we see their disposition as 'high' modernist. However, the policy technicians were a little more circumspect in orientation.

The high-modernist confidence was linked to an acceptance of the global reach of these technologies – social science methodologies can be applied universally - and a view of the globe as a commensurate space of measurement. Any criticism of testing, be it national or international, was seen to be resolvable through technical and theoretical advances. Amongst participants there was an imagined future possibility of a testing utopia: technologies and science, without politics, could potentially solve all of the problems associated with testing. We might see this disposition within the habitus of policy makers and technicians as a utopian belief in testing, which for others may appear as dystopian, within a technocracy unsullied by the will of the people as expressed though parliamentary politics. At the same

time, we also see the politicians calling on these technologies for legitimation in the face of the decline in their standing (van Zanten, 2006).

This utopian view of testing was evident in discussions of new technical developments. For example, NAT Policy Technician noted, regarding new modes of computerised adaptive testing in which test items of greater or lesser difficulty are presented to test-takers depending on their responses to previous questions:

> So what we are doing with this branching, what we hope to achieve is to ask a broader range of questions. Basically, we are doubling the number of items that are available. Each student will have a chance to take one of the five different tests.

Adaptive testing is a response to the argument that current paper and pencil tests do not provide particularly useful information regarding the top and bottom performing students. For example, INT Policy Maker noted: 'I think the more variability you can get, the richer those studies become. You learn from diversity. [International testing] is not about uniformity. [It] is about getting an understanding of a very multifaceted world'.

The significance of administering tests online was stressed by all interviewees and there was also a common optimism about improvements in technologies and psychometrics. For example, NAT Policy Maker stated: 'In our area there's been more progress in the last three years than in the last 30 years'. On this same point the INT Policy Maker asked: 'How can we develop an appropriate, fair, reliable way to measure the conditions of education worldwide?' Implicit in this question was a confidence that this was achievable. There was a confidence that technological (and related theoretical) developments and on-line administration of tests would improve the quality of the tests, the data available, and its usefulness for policy and practice.

Cosmopolitan

The cosmopolitan sensibility as part of the habitus of these policymakers and technicians is a key dispositional feature that marks them in distinction from colleagues located in different positions within education bureaucracies in nations, particularly at the sub-national level. This was augmented by the extent of their global mobilities and their location within the global education policy field. It was clear that the participants saw education policy as a global phenomenon. For example, NAT Policy Maker observed:

> [G]lobalisation means that the global context is increasingly the context in which we all operate. Now I think as a nation we have worked out that physics doesn't change when you cross the Murray River. But actually physics doesn't change when you cross the Indian Ocean or the Pacific Ocean. We've seen I think particularly through PISA that we have the greatest amount to learn, not through comparing one jurisdiction with another in Australia, but looking at the international comparisons. We've all seen haven't we that there've been surprises in the international comparison.

In the same spirit, INT Policy Technician observed: 'I think it reflects the realisation, the general phenomena of globalisation that the graduates of countries are no longer just competing domestically - they're competing internationally'. The disposition of these participants tends toward one version of cosmopolitanism, which emphasises cultural convergence and increasing homogeneity, and thus possibilities for commensuration and comparison, rather than cosmopolitanisms that appreciate cultural differences and pose questions about how to live together when faced with alterity and incommensurability.

The importance, and the realisable possibility, of international comparison were stressed by all participants. For example, INT Policy Maker noted: 'I think there's, it's not just necessarily global, it may also be multilateral, but I think one of the biggest things that PISA has sparked is the interest of countries in other countries.' In terms of global/national relations, the NAT/INT Policy Maker commented:

> There's a shift, a huge shift. My secretary of state has been quoted as saying it's not good enough just to look at improvement in terms of how you do year-on-year nationally. The real signifier of improvement is how you're doing against the best in the world. .

We note here in these observations, as well as in relation to cosmopolitan sensibility, Massey's (2005) important point that it is not simply the case of the global affecting the national, but that the national is a crucial element in the constitution, in this case, of the global education policy field. Grek (2010) has also made this point in respect of the global and the national in education policy. This is the cosmopolitan disposition as Beck (2006) suggests, whereby the global and the local are thought of as interconnected and interpenetrating principles. As noted above, we see the dispositions of these participants as giving strong emphasis to global framings of the national/local, reconstituting the latter in ways that potentially elide important specificities.

All participants felt that data sets could be aligned from various systems. INT Policy Maker stated:

> I always encourage countries to actually link those two up, how are you doing on something that is important to you [Australia] such as NAPLAN. But then the second question is, how does NAPLAN fit into something that's important to the world? Which strangely we have two different metrics. We don't actually know how they relate. Some countries have actually done some very thoughtful work in getting those metrics somehow synchronised. I think that's what you need to get because the stories are different. You can do better on NAPLAN every year, but what you don't know is whether the world is changing even faster. So you need to have those perspectives; a perspective that looks inward and one that looks outward.

Later this interviewee observed the necessity of complementary international and national testing:

> And then basically [international testing] can show you where there are holes in the national assessment and the national curriculum. You see suddenly for example all

> Australian students do particularly well on this type of task, but not so well on that type of task, oh that's actually not taught but it's taught in every other country.

Similarly, INT Policy Maker observed, 'I think the most effective systems are the ones which combine their international with their national assessment programmes of different types'. We can also see here the location of the national within the global education policy field.

The significance of the globe as a space of measurement and comparison was taken for granted by all participants, as is evident in this statement from NAT Policy Maker: 'The real signifier of improvement is how you're doing against the best in the world'. Here we see a cosmopolitan disposition, central to the habitus that we are analysing, which emphasises the homogenising force of 'globalisation' as both discourse and practice and thus tends to minimise the importance of cultural specificity at national/local scales.

Scientistic

Each of the five interviewees demonstrated a real confidence—a high-modernist disposition—in understanding the social through quantitative social science methods. We see this as a scientistic dimension of their habitus, in which there is a strong belief in scientific methods, and particularly statistical analysis, and an acceptance that this is the most appropriate means of knowing and making the social legible. The use of the term 'scientistic' is not intended to be derogatory, but rather to signify a particular set of epistemological and ontological assumptions.

Strathern (1997) has argued that globalisation, as manifested in what we would see as a cosmopolitan disposition, is the capacity to imagine the global as a commensurate space of measurement and, in policy terms today, arguing the *necessity* of such measurement.[‡] For

[‡] This point relates to what we see as 'globalisation from above' and its alignment to cosmopolitan dispositions that emphasise cultural convergence, in contrast to what Appadurai (2000) characterises as 'globalisation from below'.

example, it was argued by INT Policy Maker that improvement related to effective measurement: 'We cannot improve what we cannot measure'. This belief in the veracity of information produced through rigorous scientific methods and its value for educational improvement is what we are characterising as a scientistic element of the habitus of global policy actors. Related, Wiseman (2010) has observed regarding the effects of what we are seeing as the dispositions of global policy actors in education in this way:

> ...what widely available international data on education has done is create an intellectual space where educational policy making is not geographically or politically bounded but instead bounded by the extent of the legitimated evidence used to support one decision or policy versus another. (p. 8)

Another important element of seeing the globe as a commensurate space of measurement was an implicit acceptance of the isomorphism of schooling systems globally. This was very evident in the acceptance of the validity and reliability of say PISA, despite deep cultural and national differences framing varying national schooling systems. Yet we also know that a lot of technical work (differential item function) goes into the creation of such isomorphism on PISA. This work is informed by the cosmopolitan dispositions of these policy makers and technicians and their tendency toward a view of 'globalization from above' that emphasises cultural convergence and similarities.

While both the global policy makers and technicians had a middle class educated habitus with a cosmopolitan sensibility, the two groups saw different others as part of the peer groups to whom they were obligated in terms of the legitimacy of data as evidence. The global policy makers talked much more about managing the politicians, while the technicians saw their obligations more towards peers in their field of expertise and to scientific principles of knowledge production. In Bourdieu's terms, we might see the policy technicians' inclination to identify with the autonomous pole of the field in which symbolic capitals hold

the greatest value (e.g. the regard of peers), in tension with policy maker orientation toward the heteronomous pole and the need to answer to powerful external agents (e.g. politicians, business). For example, NAT Policy Technician stated:

> One of the advisory groups that I work with closely is the Measurement Advisory Group that has most eminent people in the field of education measurement in Australia… So that is the group of eminent experts in the field of educational measurement and in the field of assessment, who provide us with advice.

NAT Policy Technician clearly felt professional obligations to fellow experts rather than to those who make political usage of educational data. There was always a sense among policy technician in our broader sample that the political disaffected and sullied the professional work of the bureaucrats and technicians. Even the policy makers saw this as well, to some extent at least. For example, NAT Policy Maker saw the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy in Australia as high stakes because of its political framing, which was considered to be a corrupting influence on the technical dimensions and educational usefulness of the assessment.

The scientistic impulse was also evident in desires to expand the scope of educational assessments and to make broader sets of educational outcomes commensurable, for example, student well-being. Support for these broader measures globally was made clear in an observation by INT Policy Maker:

> The more you use those kinds of data the more emphasis you need to make sure that you encapsulate what's really important. Schooling and learning is not just about [maths and reading] but you need to build in interpersonal competencies, problem solving. Intrapersonal competencies and motivation, self-concept and so on and these are things we just need to do better and need to work hard on to broaden the horizon.

This scientistic belief in the potential commensurability of all educational outcomes was

closely linked to the high-modernist sensibility that was manifest in the views of participants that shortcomings in present testing programs could be overcome through technical improvements and advances.

Closing

We have sought to document qualities of disposition that appear to be emerging as a shared habitus amongst policy actors in the global education policy field. Bourdieu has observed:

> One of the functions of the notion of habitus is to account for the unity of style, which unites the practices and goods of a single agent or a class of agents. … The habitus is this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods, practices. (1998, p. 8)

There is an important alignment between the habitus of global policy makers and technicians, irrespective of their institutional and national locations. Specific differences link to varying primary habitus and different secondary acquisitions of dispositions through positioning in their organisations and the global field.

The habitus of the policy makers and technicians was similar in respect of the globe as a commensurate space of measurement, in terms of the promises of technology, psychometrics and science, and in relation to a cosmopolitan sensibility that acknowledged the prioritising of the global and inter-relationships with the local and national. While their habitus is embodied middle class, it includes high-modernist, cosmopolitan and scientistic dispositions: schemes of perception and thinking that underpin their practices. All interviewees embodied social, cultural and symbolic capitals that come with high-level engagement in policy making at transnational scales, as evidenced in their travel and their global professional networks. They all had a similar ‘feel for the game’; there was a habitus alignment, despite individual differences and variations of nationality and nation, of primary

habitus, dispositions and positions within the global education policy field. The differences in the habitus of these policy makers and technicians indicated two things: their own location within their own organisations and their work functions, and the location of their organisation in respect of the global education policy field. Our argument is that the alignments and shared characteristics of the habitus that we have documented are central to the constitution and functioning of the global education policy field.

We have noted a dearth of research on the habitus of policy elites in respect of the global education policy field and have proffered a beginning analysis here, seeking to work with habitus as a concept and a methodological tool. Understanding the habitus of policy actors in the global field is important because the emergence of a global education policy field is one of the most significant education policy development in the period following the end of the Cold War. Of course, what we have seen, in Bourdieu's (2003) terms, is the 'performative' use of globalisation here to bracket out all meanings except the neo-liberal, manifested in education as the global education reform movement (Sahlberg, 2011). This movement, though, is always mediated in national schooling systems in vernacular ways, reflecting their histories, politics and cultures. Two things are occurring here: the constitution of a global education policy field and the impact of global education discourses within national education policy fields.

We have recognised the significance of thinking carefully about the methodological issues associated with interviews as a form of data collection and the rejection of 'tape recorder sociology'. Alvesson (2011) notes that 'high brow' theory demands 'high brow' methodology and we have attempted to move in that direction by acknowledging the complexities of the interview encounter and suggesting the things we can learn from it in terms of the habitus of policy makers and technicians.

We have invoked and applied Bourdieu's thinking tools, including methodological insights concerning research interviews, to a new empirical focus. If we accept Weaver-Hightower's (2008) concept of 'policy ecology', recognising the multiple levels and nature of factors in the policy cycle, we also have to accept the significance of our own positioning as policy researchers in respect of our research. This is Bourdieu's argument concerning the necessity of researcher reflexivity and we would argue that this reflexivity has helped us to understand the habitus of global policy actors and its importance to the constitution of the global education policy field. Of course, the question remains as to whether what we have documented is simply a contemporary middle class habitus or what we might classify as a distinctive 'policy habitus'.

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