Mobilities of policy and mobile parents
creating a new dynamic in policy borrowing within state schooling

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Abstract

In this article we tackle the scarcity of integrating organisational perspectives into the studies of globalisation in education. In particular, we focus on the transformations imposed on schools by individual parents, arguing that schools as modern organisations change not only through top-down pressures orchestrated by an array of international organisations, for-profit companies and media as shown in previous research, but also through the agency of mobile parents, who seek to import reforms from elsewhere, based on their previous schooling experiences abroad. We focus on a specific group of middle class parents, who are continuously mobile, moving between global cities for employment. This paper brings into the discussion the role of individual parental strategies as they seek to promote education policy-borrowing. By applying the theoretical lens of stakeholder identification and salience, using a multi case study research design, we suggest that parents express high levels of power, legitimacy and a sense of urgency, thus being able to successfully advocate for change. We argue that while exploring organisational reform occurring due to the globalisation of education, we must view parents as central actors in this new space. Drawing on three case studies, we demonstrate the necessity of this theoretical and empirical move for the field.
Introduction

Gita Steiner Khamsi (2004, 2016) among others (e.g., Lubienski, Scott, & DeBray, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Verger, Parcerisa, & Fontdevila, 2019; Waldow, 2009) has led the research agenda examining how the globalisation of education has played out across various local contexts, over the course of the past decade. Her work and that of others has empirically demonstrated, and theoretically developed, our understandings of how nation states borrow, adopt and adapt policies from other parts of the world. The strong claim made is that global governance frameworks have been fueled by international organisations such as the OECD, UNESCO and World Bank (Robertson, Mundy, & Verger, 2012), which in turn have been further promoted and embedded by the media. These processes, it has been argued, account for the numerous educational reforms witnessed over the past two decades (Grey & Morris, 2018). Research has also shown how global reforms are variously taken-up by local actors (Avigur-Eshel & Berkovich, 2019; Nir, Kondakci, & Emil, 2018) and how context affects its interpretation and implementation (Silova, 2010; Steiner Khamsi, 2016). Nevertheless, more often than not, the mobility of policy has been widely perceived as a macro-level process, evidence of the pervasiveness of neoliberal thinking, and a set of influences that promote privatisation, commodification, pressures of performativity and the introduction of the concept of consumers within education. The degree to which local organisations became isomorphic is questioned, but the fact of global inflections in local education reforms has become undeniable.

In this article, we wish to complement the above scholarship by shining a closer light on local mechanisms at work through which the school organisation continues to be shaped by policies and practices that originate beyond the state. We argue that the increasing flow back and forth of families (mostly of middle class origin because they take-up work opportunities abroad or are sent by their companies on overseas assignments) leads to parents becoming powerful and legitimate activists demanding globally oriented changes to the school curricula. We suggest that school level reforms, initiated and sometimes led by such groups of parents present yet another variety of ‘policy borrowing’, especially when these are anchored in families’ first hand experiences of other education systems. To develop this position, we use three case studies illustrating the different ways mobile parents have brought pressure to bear on schools to innovate through borrowing policy and practice initiatives learnt about abroad. We approach our analysis from an organisational perspective, building on theory of stakeholder identification and salience (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), thus highlighting the agentic
power of globally mobile parents, a hitherto unacknowledged group of stakeholders in the processes of the globalisation of education.

To examine the links between mobility, policy-borrowing and school-level innovations we build on the bringing together of two separate fields of study: critical comparative studies in education policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Steiner Khamsi, 2004) and sociology of family mobilities (Ball, 2012a,b; Brooks & Waters, 2017). We conceive of globally mobile parents as stakeholders who bring tacit knowledge into the field and also have the cultural resources to demand school reforms to different degrees. To delve deeper into understanding of how such parents might express the need for, and the kinds of school reform desired, we employ the organisational theory of stakeholder identification and salience, probing the micro-organisational logic found across three case studies, each of which depicts a pertinent and thought-provoking set of issues the field must consider further. Thus, rather than focusing on policy-borrowing by organisations and nations, we examine processes of policy transfer at the micro-level, led by one of the most mobile elements of schooling today - families.

**Theoretical orientation**

*Policy travels*

Learning from elsewhere is an incontrovertible part of policy making processes in many countries, and reference to other systems’ schooling has become a mundane practice for policy makers and practitioners everywhere (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2018). Policy borrowing is appealing to many because it offers an ‘evidence-based’ proposal for improving the efficiencies and outcomes of education provision. The OECD takes this approach when emphasising the value of borrowing ideas from other places to improve schooling, yet critical studies in the field demonstrate the embedded power relations operating across systems and show how context shapes outcomes of such policy borrowing, with particular local needs often left unmet (Auld & Morris, 2016; Morris, 2015; Nir, Kondakci, & Emil, 2018).

The desire to improve educational provision, coupled with the reality of limited government funding, lack of certainty about what ‘good education’ is, the growing influence of international organisations such as the OECD, World Bank and UNESCO, and finally the pressures for accountability across the systems, have put unrealistic burdens on nation states (Steiner Khamsi, 2004). While world culture theorists suggest that universalised reforms are
seen as a sign of progress (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997) following the rise of global organisations (Meyer & Bromley, 2013), other scholars put more emphasis on considering how local context shapes the ways ‘progress’ is achieved and sustained (Steiner Khamsi, 2004) and how context matters, for example in highly centralised systems (Nir, Kondakci, & Emil, 2018). In any case, many local reforms are justified by highlighting their success elsewhere (Grey & Morris, 2018). Avigur-Eshel and Berkovich (2019), for example, have showed how various reforms were argued for and imported into Israel. Though different political leaders appeared to promote a pseudo-conflict about which external reforms to introduce into the Israeli education system, the authors demonstrated that all were in fact seeking to introduce slightly different versions of the same global reform, in this case – managerialism – yet using this to advance their own political interests (Steiner Khamsi, 2016).

Growing attention has been given in recent research to the ‘education industry’ profiting from International Large-Scale Assessments (ILSAs), including for-profit companies, NGOs and various intermediaries (Berkovich & Benoliel, 2019; Hogan, Sellar, & Lingard, 2016). Nation states are also active players in this ‘game’. On the one hand, they are being pressured to improve and reform their education systems based on ILSA outcomes, while on the other hand, they are manipulating ILSA data for their own political maneuvering needs (Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012). It is also argued that in the era of global governance, various external actors have gained increased power over schools, including professional organisations, foundations and parents, among others (Verger, 2019; Eyal & Berkovich, 2019). While the role of parents and in particular middle-class parents, had been explored by sociologists of education (Lareau, 2003; Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011, Vincent, 2017; Vincent & Ball, 2007), we wish to examine the specific expertise and influence parents of mobile families might bring to bear on individual schools. This requires us to change the vantage point from which we examine the issue of policy borrowing – moving from a top-down to a more bottom up approach.

Mobile middle-class families

Mobility comprises a key social, economic and political issue in today’s world (Brooks & Waters, 2017; Burrell, 2010; Kunz, 2016). As high levels of spatial mobility of individuals, families, and communities characterise modern times, emerging conceptualisations ‘connect movement and mobilities with formation of subjectivities and identities’ (Skelton, 2013: 471). Traditionally, research on mobility has focused on immigrants from less developed countries
who moved to Western Europe and North America (e.g., Massey et al., 1993). More recently, researchers have also begun to explore the mobility practices of other groups, including economic elites and high-skilled migrants (e.g., Koh & Wissink, 2018; Kunz, 2016; Ryan, 2019). Our own work has focused on a specific group – known as globally mobile professionals or global middle classes (Authors, 2018a, b; 2019a, b, c). These professionals and their families are highly mobile, frequently moving back and forth across various parts of the globe, sent out by employers or seeking out new career opportunities. They are defined as highly educated, who have specific expert knowledge and skills that are needed by multinational corporations (Ball & Nikita, 2014). They serve as high-tech, financial and legal specialists, and are employed as middle managers, engineers, IT software developers, industry scientists (Beaverstock, 2005).

While recently some scholars have started to examine what may be the unique characteristics and educational practices of these globally mobile families, research has largely ignored the tacit knowledge of other education systems these families may carry with them from place to place. Such knowledge, in the context of growing parental involvement in education more broadly (Rowe & Windle, 2012), is likely to be influencing local schooling and change the ways schools as organisations function. The question is how and through what mechanisms. While scholars researching the experiences of migrant parents tend to highlight the real challenges these parents face in complying with, and integrating into a new education system (Antony-Newman, 2019; Turney & Kao, 2009), we argue that parents might also affect the school directly in terms of the expectations they have developed in relation to education based on their experiences of schooling elsewhere (see Doherty, 2018). In what follows, we want to examine a more agentic engagement on the part of parents, who have the cultural resources to make their views heard – not only via the specific school choices they make for their children, but also through their interactions within the schools their children attend, in terms of demands they make that relate to innovative school practices, structures and curricula parents have previously encountered.

Organisational logic

The final part of our theoretical framing overview explains how an understanding of organisational logic within a school or, in other words, the examination of the micro within schools’ policy making (Ball, 2012), might help us explore this issue further. The emergence
of formal organisations is one of the distinctive features of modernity (Drori, Höllerer, & Walgenbach, 2014), and the establishment of modern schooling is an integral part of this. There are varying assertions about the ways globalisation has altered formal and informal organisational structures, some claiming there is a homogenising effect driven by global governance structures and ILSEs (Lerch, Bromley, Ramirez, & Meyer, 2017). Others, following the same logic, however continue to emphasise the importance of context and local resistance in determining how policy is implemented locally (Steiner Khamsi, 2004). Drori, Meyer, and Hwang (2009), for instance, suggest that organisations are intertwined with globalisation, as both involve reliance on a set of similar concepts such as rationalisation, professionalisation, and actorhood. Nonetheless, both views acknowledge the multidimensionality of globalisation in terms of time and space, often re-naming it glocalisation (Drori, Höllerer, & Walgenbach, 2014). Glocalisation is then examined as an overarching phenomenon, with influences from above - shaping schools’ organisational structures and functions (Mizrahi-Steltman & Drori, 2016), but also taking into account contextual influences on the ground.

Isomorphism is claimed to be the outcome of the global circulation of comparative assessment exercises and analysis of systems with the highest performance outcomes (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). This process of mimicry, where organisations look-up and implement successful practices, has been argued to be a central plank of neo-institutional logic governing globalised societies (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000). This position claims that NGOs and international organisations promote universal approaches to tackling transformations needed in nations and organisations. The role of individual actors within institutional theory is contested (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009). While larger and more central entities are acknowledged as having agentic properties – specific organisations, policy, governments; individuals are less likely to be seen as having a clear role or impact (Hwang, Colyvas, & Drori, 2019). The position we take here, is that individual agents must be examined more closely to understand their potential influence. We should not dismiss their insignificance in being able to act as another vehicle through which globalisation of education seeps into the local, in our view (Mizrahi-Steltman & Drori, 2016).

To do that, we found useful the body of literature related to the identification and estimated prominence of stakeholders and their ability to demand change and influence organisational leadership (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), with a particular focus on schools (Prado Tuma & Spillane, 2019). According to Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), for stakeholders to be able to gain influence over an organisation’s management, they must possess at least one of the
following attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency. Power in that context is defined as the ability to create a move that otherwise would not be performed; legitimacy is an assumption that the involvement of this particular stakeholder is desirable, proper and appropriate; and urgency is the degree to which a stakeholder claims immediate attention is needed. These three attributes are understood as aspects that affect how stakeholders are viewed by the management of an organisation. In cases where none of these are present, the stakeholder is seen as irrelevant to organisational life, but various combinations of one and two attributes can create various levels of perceived salience. Meanwhile when all three of these attributes exist, the magnitude of a stakeholder’s influence is expected to be considerable, meaning that managers will have to give priority to stakeholders’ claims. Since parents, and especially parents who might be newcomers to the school system are not always considered as natural or normative stakeholders with a ‘say’ over the school’s organisation, it is useful to try and understand how they may nevertheless be able to play a role in this context. Organisational theory is particularly important here, since research that takes a macro level approach (which is the dominant lens through which globalisation of education research has to date been conducted), focusing on the interplay between nation states, international organisations and the media, is unable to integrate such a micro-level perspective.

A short methodological note

This article is based on data collected for three large studies 2015-2018, 2017-2019 and 2018-2020 (Authors, 2015; 2016;2017a,b,c; 2018a; 2019a,b,c). The first focused on articulations of internationalisation found in six schools across Israel (by observing lessons, conducting interviews with school staff and parents, a parents’ survey and analyzing lesson plans). Follow-up interviews took place with 20 parents and a further school case study was added in 2019 to explore another specific institutional setting (a religious school applying global dimensions to its curricula). The second study examined the parenting strategies of 25 mobile middle class families who had temporarily re-located back to Israel, with a specific focus on school choice and broader educational strategies and ambitions for their children. The third study involved data collection among expat online groups in London and Berlin (more than three hundred threads were analysed, focusing on discussions of school choice and other education-related questions and comments). We employed a multi-case study methodology (Yin, 2011) with the aim to use individual case studies to explore broader themes in larger bodies of data. In this
way it is possible to ‘condense cumulative data into a meaningful narrative that carries interpretation and analysis’ (Neale, Henwood, & Holland, 2012: p.8). We combined the data from these studies to specifically focus on the intersection between organisations (schools) and globalisation, during a period of time when global dimensions were being increasingly integrated into schools across Israel. Added to this, we used an analysis of media discussions in Israel (newspapers articles and TV archives) on globalisation of education and integrating international dimensions in schooling (Authors, 2017a) to contextualise the other data sets. Each data set was inductively and thematically analysed (Schreier, 2012; Yin, 2011) with a focus on the school as a central organisation, including questions of school choice, differentiation processes within the school, school reforms, the way parents understood and compared schools they had experience in, and specifically, if and how these mobile parents expressed their agency in negotiating the provision of education with particular schools. The findings from this analytical work within each data set were then compared and contrasted, seeking out common themes. While most of the data is based on Israeli samples, we believe the findings that show how mobile parents are successful in demanding individual schools take-up ideas and practices from other parts of the world constitute an important contribution to the broader discussion, and would likely be mirrored in other contexts. In the following we take each case study in turn, showing how globally mobile parents are initiators and accelerators of the organisational change in schools.

**International Baccalaureate (IB) as a hypothetical organisational alternative to the national curricula**

The first insight we offer here, in relation to parents conceived of as actors in the globalisation of education within local spaces, emerged from a study conducted between 2015 and 2018, which was a multiple case study analysis, combining interviews with school principals and teachers as well as a survey of parents and follow up interviews. The aim of the original study was to identify perceptions of internationalisation in general, and interest in the implementation of the IB within Israeli public schooling at a time when the IB was not well known about in the country. The initial perception of the IB was generally positive, with all interviewed and surveyed stakeholders identifying the shortcomings of the national education system as a reason for seeing the IB as a valid and valuable alternative to state curricula. Parents and local school leaders saw the national Ministry of Education as the main obstacle to such a change.

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1 The data collection of this part was performed by Yuval Dvir and published in Authors 2016,2018c.
occurring (Authors, 2016; Authors, 2018). Thus, the idea of a reform introduced from abroad and a qualification that would be certified internationally, was felt to be too challenging to hope for, given the anticipated state resistance to such a widespread change. Here, the nation state was not seen as the leader of reform, being inspired from outside for innovation, but rather as a roadblock to such international influences (Authors, 2015).

One of our case study sites was a very affluent neighbourhood in the centre of Israel. In 2015, a survey of more than 200 parents at the school found them to be very positive about the possibility of an IB curriculum being offered to their children (Authors, 2016). In the follow up interviews in 2019, many parents reported they had chosen to apply to this school because they believed it might eventually offer the IB. We examined where this suggestion might have come from, and traced its origins in discussions across various fora for expats (professionals who relocate for work), which coupled with the favourable coverage of the IB by the media, and lobbying efforts by middle-class parents to improve state education, meant many local families were increasingly eager for their children to take the IB, and for their local school to offer it. On these expat fora we found parents sharing their positive evaluation of the IB programme at schools their children had attended while living abroad, and from expat Israeli families who were seeking advice online about what schools to approach which offered the IB or something similar before their planned return to Israel.

As a result of parental demands, various schools across our sample had developed a range of initiatives such as hiring teachers with experience of teaching abroad and promoting international mindedness (the core value of IB). These schools were mostly located in the geographic centre of the country and served mainly affluent neighbourhoods within major cities. Additionally, one school proactively reached out to form a collaboration with the only public international school in Israel, which caters mainly for international students, to create a hybrid organisation that would potentially allow the local state school to teach the IB. As the media picked up the story, other schools (always in more highly resourced parts of the country) began to move in a similar direction, suggestive of an isomorphic flow towards the introduction of the IB.

We suggest that the parental advocacy of these mobile middle class families gained increasing legitimacy through online and offline informal discussions, and, bolstered by positive media coverage, pushed local schools into this particular direction. As Kingdon argued, the process occurred during a particular ‘policy window’ (Kingdon, 1995) – a growing international

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2 Performed by the first author.
interest in the IB, and where the mobile families driving this call for change are drawing on solutions experienced ‘out there’ to shape provision ‘here and now’ (Steiner Khamsi. 2016). Our analysis suggests that these middle class parents had the power and sense of authority to make demands for their children’s schooling, that their views were seen as legitimate because of their experience abroad and with the IB, and that the increasing urgency for the need for reform – as more voices joined the discussions – was a key driver in changing the schools’ offers. Schools often react to change in an isomorphic manner and adopt reforms due to the pressures of being compared; not only through parents-led initiatives. Nevertheless, in a centralized and very conservative education system, like the Israeli one, our data suggests that the ignition of this reform was fueled by mobile parents, bringing their personal experiences from elsewhere to the fore, galvanizing the need for reform in a context already at least partially open to it.

**Combining global dimensions in a religious school**

As a second case study, we have chosen to focus on a school that was added to our sample a little later – because it represented a unique but critical focus for Israel - a religious Jewish school that was visibly embracing a global dimension in its curriculum. This primary school, located in a central city, is part of Israel’s state Jewish religious sector. The school was founded on the site of a previously failing school which had to be closed due to low enrolment numbers. The neighbourhood that the school serves is mostly populated by religious Jews, who had previously sent their children to schools in remote neighborhoods so that they could attend a religious school. To meet the needs of these local families, the municipality decided the new school should be a religious one. However, given many of the families in the area were immigrants from the US and UK, some of whom had been fairly mobile before settling down in Israel, the primary school decided to add a global dimension to its curriculum (unheard of in other religious schools) and that English was to be the medium of instruction. Indeed, this school claimed to be the only one in Israel to have most subjects taught in English, have two educators per classroom – one who spoke Hebrew and one English – and a project-based curriculum, all borrowed from the US charter school system (as explained by the school staff). The main argument made repeatedly by all school stakeholders, including the management team, teachers, parents, and superintendent, was that religion and globalisation were capable of mutually evolving and creating complex interactions that transcended the boundaries of the

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3 The data collection for this study was undertaken by Itamar Rosenfeld and published in Authors 2020.
commonly recognised dichotomy between global and local dimensions in education. Based on our research it became clear that the parents had advocated the integration of global dimensions, alongside a religious education, similar to the way Jewish schools function in the US and the UK. In fact, contrary to the popular belief held in Israel, that religious schools are highly conservative and submissive to traditional values, interviews and observations gathered indicated a high level of parental involvement in shaping the specific implementation of the curriculum and pedagogy. In this case parental influence was critical in shaping provision given they had the right to choose a school for their children based on the segment of religious observance they wanted in a school, and the degree of such observance. In this way they possessed the power and legitimacy to make demands of the school. Moreover, as the previous school on the same site had failed to perform and gain enough enrolled students, a sense of urgency was achieved, opening a ‘policy window’, that allowed even greater parental influence in the shaping the school offer. Important about this case study is the suggestion that globalisation and religion need not be disjointed commitments. We argue that this is another example of how globalisation of education – teaching in English, modelled on US charter school curricula – was a push that came from within the local community and the school itself, supported by the middle-class parents who had lived in a number of different places and had a range of experiences with regards to types of education. The transformation of this school cannot be explained by institutional state-led policy borrowing, as the state’s vision of religious schooling is rather conservative and inward-oriented. Thus organisational theory provides us with a useful framework to make better sense of the way particular schools are being transformed and why.

**School choice to deal with anticipated uncertainty**

In this case study we examined how constantly mobile middle class parents, who are frequently mobile for work, manage this mobility within their family lives. The data comprises interviews with 25 families who had spent significant time abroad with their children and experienced schooling elsewhere, and data from expat online groups in both London and Berlin. Here we argue that school choice strategies of mobile families are likely to play a role in the pressures to reform and adapt by schools in many national settings. School choice can be understood as a fundamental articulation of a parent’s power, not only to choose a certain school, but also to legitimately advocate for change within these chosen educational institutions.
In analysing the rationales for choosing a particular school among these mobile families, we found that, as noted in many studies of middle class parents around the world (Lareau, 2003; Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011), these families engage in intensive forms of parenting and aim to cultivate resources that will enable their children’s mobility and securement of advantage in the future (Authors, 2019). These parents’ school choice decisions were the result of proactive research and a constant comparison of curricula, pedagogy and expected outcomes between first, local schools and those previously attended in other countries, and second, weighing up the different options locally.

What is perhaps less expected about these dis-placed middle class families is that they are seeking to ensure their children gain the necessary international credentials to succeed anywhere in the world or in the transnational space, but that parents are also very focused on providing their children with a sense of national identity and belonging (Authors, 2018a;2019b). This means that globally mobile parents are not just focused on being able to send their children to schools offering the IB, or other internationally-recognised curricula, but are also looking for educational provision that will facilitate their desire to maintain their links with their homelands, religious convictions and/or the main language used at home. For example, on the online fora, parents promoted schools in Berlin and London that offered classes in several languages (Spanish, French, Hebrew etc.). We also found cases where a discussion topic that appeared online was then taken up directly with a particular school (Authors, 2019a). One example of such a development was incorporation of small group language studies for families from different linguistic communities, which started as an extra-curricular arrangement, and was later adopted by the school.

Our analysis of this case suggests that we should conceive of schools as operating in the competitive space of global cities, meaning that in their struggle for recognition, they must be open to the needs and demands of a considerably-sized population, who usually have the resources to make a choice about their children’s schooling. Thus, their presence in terms of numbers and their purchasing power in terms of resources, give them the power and legitimacy to have a voice in the constitution of the educational product being offered by schools. Their urgency derives, we suggest, from their frequent mobility – thus schools with a high portion of globally mobile families are constantly having to say goodbye to, and attract new students.

**Discussion and Conclusion**
The mounting calls for constant reform and improvement of national education systems are both driven and echoed by international organisations (Authors, 2020). These calls are fueled by a data-based discourse initiated by advocates of ILSAs. Pressure comes from outside and within countries, as politicians and various interest groups use ILSAs to promote their own political agendas. Global neoliberal forms of governance work at the macro scale, where states, international organisations and for-profit companies meet and negotiate whose interests will prevail. In this special issue and in our paper, we have sought to look more closely at the micro-level – individual schools, small groups of parents, where the very local meets the global and what transpires through these interactions. No doubt these smaller entities are part of a larger governance network, where the nation, international organisations, and/or the media have all played a role in shaping desires, and obviously it is impossible to fully differentiate among the various influences in the field. However, our focus has been on when forms of schooling, innovations in pedagogy or ambitions for future outcomes, are brought in from elsewhere via the mobility of families. Moving away from the suggestion that it is only those with formal power and authority in schools, such as school principals, who have agency to interpret and implement ideas from elsewhere, we have shown how those parents with the experience of different forms of education and the resources to be agentic in such institutionalised spaces, are directly demanding change to local education provision.

Parents as non-education professionals but customers of schooling, are usually understood to elicit their resources for negotiating that their demands be met from their socio-economic class location (Lareau, 2003). Here, we have argued that families’ mobility and experiences in other education systems are crucial for their capability to lead changes in their particular schools, sometimes with broader effect. We acknowledge these parents tend to be highly economically and culturally resourced, but its their mobility and first-hand experience that is the critical resource they draw on to demand broader changes, not just negotiate that their child ‘come out on top’ (Reay et al., 2013). While parents’ entrepreneurial actions have been explored (e.g. Auerbach, 2007; Authors, 2016; Gofen & Blomqvist, 2014; Merry, 2005), here we initiate a new focus that straddles policy borrowing studies with the sociology of family mobilities, allowing us to show how parents can act as initiators of reform, drawing on their own experiences as evidence of proven success elsewhere, as they work to push for changes in the local systems they arrive into.

We applied the theoretical lens of stakeholder identification and salience, in an analysis of a multi case study research design, to show how globally mobile parents represented high levels of power (being able to make a choice), legitimacy (providing evidence of a solution that has
proven effective elsewhere) and a sense of urgency (using the policy window of mounting critiques of national education systems), to successfully advocate for change. It is at these meeting points that locally-oriented organisations, often resistant to change, are challenged by a small but powerful group of stakeholders which they found hard to ignore.

In the cases discussed, schools’ organisational structures were altered to integrate more global dimensions into their provision, or a specific global/local mix was negotiated. In these examples, it was not an intentionally-led policy agenda forced upon local actors, but changes occurred rather spontaneously, routed in the personal experiences and desires of a relatively small group of parents. The growing number of mobile families, who are seeking familiar forms of education for their children while on move, and who are not always able to afford private international schools, must therefore use their knowledge and resources to push for the changes they want through local, state schools. We have noted this potential phenomenon through a re-analysis of previously-collected case studies, and are confident such examples are likely to be found elsewhere too. The increasing flow of professionals moving internationally continues at an increasing pace, their visions of what constitutes a ‘good’ education having been formed by these international experiences. As a highly-resourced group, committed to ensuring the social mobility of their children in an uncertain and global space, their power should not be under-estimated to demand change in local schooling systems.

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