

Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen

Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen

Changing Europe Summer School IV Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe before and after the End of Socialism

Kyiv (Ukraine), 27 – 31 July 2009

at the National University of 'Kyiv-Mohyla Academy'

sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation

www.changing-europe.org

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The (Un)Importance of Public Opinion in Educational Policy-Making in Post-Communist Ukraine. Education policy 'elites' on the role of civil society in policy formation

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Language editing: Hilary Abuhove

Abstract

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the socio-political and economic landscape of Eastern European and CIS countries has been significantly altered. In the case of Ukraine, the ongoing engagement of this 'unexpected nation'¹ with neo-liberal models of capitalism and democracy has triggered the emergence of new, often externally influenced political and educational discourses. However, the shifts in discourses have not (yet) brought change to the existing Soviet-type institutional cultures and decision-making practices. As a result, the governance of present-day Ukrainian education is exercised through a rigid centralized bureaucracy, while discourses of democratization, decentralization and public involvement in policy formation are also becoming prominent.

This paper is part of a larger study in progress. Drawing on a Foucauldian concept of governmentality,² it explores the major political and educational discourses which inform the external testing of school graduates reform in Ukraine. The study interprets the introduction of standardized testing within a wider framework of shifting rationalities of policy-making in Ukraine towards greater auditing and performativity as instruments of government. The study also attempts to understand the balance of power exercised by the internal and external policy actors in the process of education policy formation. In the course of the research, sixteen interviewees, including former high-ranking UMES (Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science) officials, academics, and representatives of international organizations and donor agencies, offered their perspectives on different aspects of the education policy-making process.

Research participants presented different, sometimes conflicting views on the role of civil society in the process of educational reformation. Analysing the discourses of policy 'elites' about the (un)importance of public opinion in education policy formation provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between the centralized educational bureaucracy and civil society. The discussion will be organized in three parts. First, the perceptions of the policy 'elites' will be deconstructed to trace Soviet legacies, which present strong continuities with the Soviet regime, under which three decades of Stalinist terror and four decades of oppressive one-party rule produced generations of compliant citizens demonstrating learned helplessness and a lack of civic culture.³ Second, the paper will analyse the discontinuities with the Soviet regime using Wilson's concepts of 'faking democracy' and 'virtual politics'⁴ to explain how the centralized bureaucracy developed political technologies of imitating educational reformation and public engagement in policy formation. The discussion will conclude by attending to continuities and departures from the Soviet past as two distinct policy technologies: post-Communist and (neo)liberal. In so doing the paper will question the 'taken-for-grantedness' of the recent pro-European reorientation of governmental discourses in Ukraine.

¹ Wilson, A.: *Virtual Politics: Faking democracy in the post-Soviet world*, London: Yale University Press, 2005.

² Foucault, M.: *Governmentality*, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 87–104.

³ Klicperova et al. 1997, p. 1; Zinoviyev 1986.

⁴ Wilson, A.: *Virtual Politics. Faking democracy in the post-Soviet world*, London: Yale University Press, 2005.

1. Introduction. Mapping the field of post-Communist studies

Mainstream sociology and political sciences have produced voluminous studies⁵ documenting the regime change in the countries of the former Soviet Union, including Ukraine. In the majority of these studies Ukraine is visualized as a borderline nation whose independence was cut short by the centuries and decades of foreign domination (by the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Soviet empires), as a result of which Ukraine inherited a highly fragmented polity and society.⁶ Apart from explaining and critiquing historical and Soviet continuities, these studies attempt to theorize recent post-independence political developments, which are presented as an eclectic mixture of the legacies of the previous regime and encroaching Western influences and discourses.⁷

Knowledge claims proposed by post-Communist studies are often constructed as elaborate critiques of the state's inability to modernize and adhere to Western/European/liberal democratic norms. This critique is meticulously and consistently supported by argumentation, graphs, tables, statistics and other *visibilities*, which assist in categorizing, visualizing and *knowing* the change.⁸ The examples of state monopolies, persistent Soviet legacies in political and institutional arrangements, policy-making practices and societal attitudes are criticized as obstacles to pro-market reforms and democratic transformation.⁹

⁵ For example in Communist and Post-Communist Studies, Europe-Asia Studies, Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Nationalities Papers, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, Post-Communist Economies, Slavonic and East-European Review, Prospects, The Economics of Post-Communist Transition, The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe, and also the Canadian Journal of Ukrainian Studies, International Association of Ukrainian Studies/Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Australian Ukrainian Studies Publications, World Bank and The UNESCO Country Reports and Publications.

⁶ Cf. Kuzio, T.: Ukraine. State and Nation Building, Routledge Studies of Societies in Transition, London, New York/NY: Routledge, 1998; Motyl, A. J.: The Non-Russian States, in: Freedom Review, 1997 (Vol. 28), No. 1, pp. 56–60, Way, L.: 'Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States', presented at the conference *Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism*, Mexico City, 1–4 April 2004, Princeton University, 23 October 2003, Yale University Leitner Lecture Series, 25 March 2003; Wilson, A.: The Ukrainians. Unexpected Nation, New Haven/CT, London: Yale University Press, 2000.

⁷ Dryzek, J. / Holmes, L.: Post-Communist Democratization. Political discourses across thirteen countries, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Institutional Design Series), 2002; Krawchenko, B.: Administrative Reform in Ukraine. Setting the Agenda, Discussion Paper, No. 3, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 1997; Kuzio, T. / D'Anieri, P. (eds): Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine, Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002; Riabchuk, M.: Ambivalence or Ambiguity? Why Ukraine is Trapped between East and West, in: Velychenko, S. (ed.): Ukraine, the EU and Russia. History, culture and international relations, New York/NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Sundakov, A.: Public Sector Reforms in Ukraine. On the path of transformation, Discussion Papers, No. 18, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2001; Way, L.: 'Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States', presented at the conference *Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism*, Mexico City, 1–4 April 2004, Princeton University, 23 October 2003, Yale University Leitner Lecture Series, 25 March 2003; Wilson, A.: Virtual Politics. Faking democracy in the post-Soviet world, London: Yale University Press, 2005.

⁸ Cf. Gordon, C.: Governmental rationality. An introduction, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991; Lemke, T.: The birth of bio-politics. Michael Foucault's lectures at the College de France on neo-liberal governmentality, in: Economy and Society, 2001 (Vol. 30), No. 2, pp. 190–207; Rose, N.: Governing 'advanced' liberal democracies, in: Barry, A. / Osborne, T. / Rose, N. (eds): Foucault and Political Reason, London: University College London Press, 1996, pp. 37–64; Rose, N.: Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁹ Kuzio, T.: Ukraine. State and Nation Building. Routledge Studies of Societies in Transition, London, New York/NY: Routledge, 1998; Riabchuk, M.: Vid Malorosii do Ukrainy. Paradoksy zapiznilogo natsiestvorennya, Kyiv: Krytyka, 2000; Riabchuk, M.: Ambivalence or Ambiguity? Why Ukraine is Trapped between East and West, in: Velychenko, S. (ed.): Ukraine, the EU and Russia. History, culture and international relations, New York/NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Way, L.: 'Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States', presented at the conference *Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism*, Mexico City, 1–4 April 2004, Princeton University, 23 October 2003, Yale University Leitner Lecture Series, 25 March 2003.

Furthermore, these knowledge claims are utilized as benchmarks against the grid of Western 'normality' and are coated in liberal notions of democracy, civil society, human rights and market economies.¹⁰ Vocabularies offered by these studies are used as 'normalization', needs identification and problematization techniques for the governments in the respective countries to refocus their 'governmental gaze' with the promise of quick and calculable improvements.¹¹

The developments in Ukrainian education did not attract the same level of academic interest as Ukrainian politics.¹² Despite this difference, education research follows a similar line of criticism mounted against the state monopoly in educational policy-making and against the instances of reversion to authoritarianism in university and classroom settings.¹³ The studies maintain that the shifts in discourses have not (yet) brought change to the existing Soviet-type institutional cultures and decision-making practices. As a result, the governance of present-day Ukrainian education is exercised through a rigid centralized bureaucracy, while pedagogy presents a complex mixture of the old and new systems, with teachers trained in individualized methods reverting to authoritarian teaching as a tried method for raising students' performance. The studies emphasize the widening gaps between policy discourses and classroom practices, growing dissatisfaction with the reform strategy on the part of the practitioners and strong nation-building and market-oriented rhetoric on the part of the official policy-makers.¹⁴ These studies analyse educational reformation as a state-led governmental endeavour aimed at moulding new generations of Ukrainian citizens – bearers of national and European democratic ideals and values – and explore societal reactions to these newly imposed subjectivities.¹⁵

¹⁰ Cf. Ryavec, K.: *Russian bureaucracy. Power and pathology*, Lanham/MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2005.

¹¹ Cf. Foucault, M.: *Governmentality*, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 87–104.

¹² Examples of research on Ukrainian education policy include the International Renaissance Foundation and Open Society Institute Reports 2001–2003; Hromovyy 2004; Janmaat, J. G.: *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-speaking Population*, Utrecht, Amsterdam: Royal Dutch Geographical Society, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2000; Kremen, V.: *Osvita I Nauka v Ukraini. Innovatsiyni aspekty, strategiya, realizatsiya, rezultaty*, Hramota: Kyiv, 2005; Lokshyna, O.: *External Assessment of Student Achievements*, in: *Reform Strategy for Education in Ukraine. Educational Policy Recommendations*, Kyiv: K.I.C., 2003; Mosienko, M. (ed.): *Poza Mezhamy Mozhlyvogo. Shkola Yakoyu Vona Ye*, Kyiv: Shkilny Svit, 2004; Nikolayenko, S.: *Osvita v Innovatsiynomu Postupi Suspilstva*, Kyiv: Znannia, 2006; Ovcharuk 2003; Sundakov, A.: *Public Sector Reforms in Ukraine. On the path of transformation*, Discussion Papers, No. 18, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2001; UNDP Ukraine: *Programme of Support of Formation of Strategy on Education Reforming. Equal access to quality education*, Report for the first stage, Kyiv, 2001–2005; Razumkov Centre Report: *The System of Education in Ukraine. Main Indicators*, in: *National Security and Defence*, 2002, No. 4, pp. 3–33; Wanner, C.: *Burden of Dreams. History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

¹³ Sundakov, A.: *Public Sector Reforms in Ukraine. On the path of transformation*, Discussion Papers, No. 18, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2001; Krawchenko, B.: *Administrative Reform in Ukraine: Setting the Agenda*, Discussion Paper, No. 3, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 1997; Koshmanova, T. / Ravchyna, T.: *Teacher preparation in a post-totalitarian society. An interpretation of Ukrainian teacher educators' stereotypes*, in: *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2008 (Vol. 21), No. 2, March–April, pp. 137–158.

¹⁴ Sundakov, A.: *Public Sector Reforms in Ukraine. On the path of transformation*, Discussion Papers, No. 18, Open Society Institute, Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2001; Fimyar, O.: *Educational Policy-Making in Post-Communist Ukraine as an Example of Emerging Governmentality. Discourse analysis of selected curriculum choice and assessment policy documents (1999–2004)*, in: *Journal of Education Policy*, 2008, (Vol. 23), No. 6, pp. 571–593; Koshmanova, T. / Ravchyna, T.: *Teacher preparation in a post-totalitarian society. An interpretation of Ukrainian teacher educators' stereotypes*, in: *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2008 (Vol. 21), No. 2, March–April, pp. 137–158.

¹⁵ Cf. Janmaat, J. G.: *Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Ukraine. Educational Policy and the Response of the Russian-speaking Population*, Utrecht, Amsterdam: Royal Dutch Geographical Society, Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Univer-

2. Locating this study

As part of another form of academic enquiry, namely governmentality studies, this research¹⁶ sees its tasks differently. It does not attempt to provide a critique of existing governmental and policy-making rationalities (and practices). Instead the analysis attempts to problematize the ‘naturalness’ and ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the recent pro-European reorientation in post-Communist governmental discourses. And it does so through deconstructing one of these discourses in particular: the (non)involvement of civil society in educational policy-making.

The theoretical underpinnings of governmentality studies, or ‘analytics of government’, have been presented elsewhere.¹⁷ It is important to reiterate here that governmentality studies explore the emergence of particular ‘regimes of truth’ about governing and the ways in which these ‘truths’ are enacted at a particular point in time. The role of these studies is that of diagnosis, or, as Rose puts it, in

*seek[ing] an open and critical relation to strategies for governing, attentive to their presuppositions, their assumptions, their exclusions, their naiveties and their knaveries, their regimes of vision and their spots of blindness.*¹⁸

Thus, to use governmentality as a conceptual tool is to problematize the normatively accepted accounts of the state and deconstruct its various inconsistent practices and components.¹⁹

Drawing on a Foucauldian notion of governmentality in the study of educational policy-making allows one to see educational reformation in post-Communist Ukraine from a particular perspective that is not anchored in the *strong state – weak society* categorization. This is because state-anchored ‘easy’ categories limit the analysis to the ‘problematics of the state’, whereas this research attempts to relocate the state into the ‘problematics of government’.²⁰ To put it differently, this research does not interpret the state as a ‘monster’ that sways its powers over society; the state is instead understood as the terminal form that the government, as the ‘conduct of conduct’, takes.²¹ In taking this perspective, the analysis

siteit van Amsterdam, 2000; Janmaat 2007; Wanner, C.: *Burden of Dreams. History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

¹⁶ This paper is part of an ongoing Ph.D. research project, which analyses discourses, the balance of power and ownership of assessment policy reforms in post-Communist Ukraine from a governmentality studies perspective. Drawing on elite interviews and documentary analysis, this study examines two assessment policy reforms. The first policy, a *12-point grading scale reform*, widened the assessment scale from 5 to 12 points and institutionalized discourses of competence-based assessment. The second reform, *the external testing of school graduates*, initiated by the IRF (International Renaissance Foundation), introduced standardized testing in post-Communist education.

¹⁷ Fimyar, O.: *Using Governmentality as a Conceptual Tool in Education Policy Research*, in: *Educate ~ The Journal of Doctoral Research in Education*, [available online at www.educatejournal.org], 2008, pp. 3–18; Gordon, C.: *Governmental rationality. An introduction*, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991; Rose, N.: *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Miller, P. / Rose, N.: *Governing the Present. Administering social, economic and personal life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

¹⁸ Rose, N.: *Powers of Freedom. Reframing Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 19.

¹⁹ Petersen et al. 1998, p. 8, cited in Marston, G.: *Fashion, fiction, fertile inquiry? Struggling with the postmodern challenge and social policy analysis*, in: Eardley, T. / Bradbury, B. (eds): *Competing Visions. Refereed Proceedings of the National Policy Conference 2001*, SPRC Report 1/02, Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2002, 298–316, here p. 305, www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/nspc2001/NSPC%202001Papers/Marston.pdf, accessed 31 May 2009.

²⁰ Cf. Miller, P. / Rose, N.: *Governing the Present. Administering social, economic and personal life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, p. 21.

²¹ Foucault, M.: *Governmentality*, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 87–104.

reinterprets Foucault's dictum and dissociates itself from the focus on 'the king's head in political thought', i.e. the state, to arrive at an investigation of the modes of governance exercised by different authorities and temporary alliances, which seek to (re)shape the conduct of others.²²

Viewed from this perspective, the policy-making process is understood as a governmental activity (yet not always state-dominated) aimed at reshaping the 'conduct of conduct' of post-Communist countries and their citizens. The reshaping of the 'conduct of conduct' is achieved through an assemblage of policy rationalities translated into action through a set of policy technologies. With its focus on assessment reforms, this study interprets the changes in discourses of educational assessment within the wider context of the shifting rationalities of decision-making in post-Communist education. One such newly introduced policy, the external testing of school graduates reform [standardized testing], is particularly important, because apart from its benign goals of eliminating corruption and providing equal access to higher education, it advances *auditing as an instrument of government* in education. The new rationalities and technologies of auditing work to create measurable and comparable units of information to be used by policy-makers in the agenda-setting and decision-making processes. The introduction of audit cultures in Ukrainian education symbolizes the adoption of Western-type managerial practices of self-auditing and performativity. This marks a departure from Soviet-type '*hard forms*' of power (based on fear of authority) to '*soft*', self-regulating, but still hierarchical forms of power (based on measurement and performance indicators).

3. Continuities and departures from the Soviet past. Post-Communist and (neo)liberal policy initiation technologies

The discussion presented in the remainder of the paper revolves around the questions of how policy initiatives emerge in Ukrainian education and how (if at all) public opinion affects the process of educational reformation. The analysis of the interviewees' responses to these questions delineates two distinct and to some extent contrasting ways of initiating and legitimating policy in Ukraine. These contrasting methods of policy initiation will be referred to here as *post-Communist* and *(neo)liberal* policy technologies. The language used by the research interviewees plays an important role in constructing and contrasting these two policy technologies. While the description of *(neo)liberal* policy technology abounds with policy sociology terms such as 'policy model', 'direct pressure', 'indirect pressure', 'expert groups', 'negotiations', 'technical assistance', etc., the use of these terms in *post-Communist* policy technology is minimal. Instead, *post-Communist* policy technology is described by non-specialist and at times emotionally coloured language – '*Tormenting from Below*' is one such example. Other examples of non-specialist vocabulary include 'how things are done here', 'how we do it here', 'the chaos that we have here' and 'what they have there'.

Two things are important in these non-specialist descriptions. First, these explanations are based on a pronounced 'here'/'there' dichotomy, a powerful category of thought that can be traced back to the Soviet and Cold War eras. However, the 'here'/'there' dichotomy remains strong in the post-Communist period as well. Moreover, it has now been intensified by the growing inferiority complex of national vs.

²² Cf. *ibid.*; Foucault 1977; Miller, P. / Rose, N.: *Governing the Present. Administering social, economic and personal life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, p. 54.

Western political, social, economic, technological, etc. standards.²³ Despite the attempts to avoid conventional categorizations in this analysis, the naming of policy formation technologies as *post-Communist* and *(neo)liberal* may appear to mimic the above here/there dichotomy. However, this is not the case, because what one sees in the policy-making arena in Ukraine is not a here/there divide, but rather the effects of the 'there', i.e. Western rationalities and technologies, being translated and embedded into the 'here', i.e. the national educational context. Or, in other words, one witnesses the 'there' being merged with the 'here' with all the accompanying uneven consequences and effects. Second, the evident lack of policy terms in the accounts of the internal interviewees does not comply with the straightforward but insufficient explanation that policy sociology as an evolving body of knowledge has not yet become a part of the political, bureaucratic or practitioner discourses. As follow-up interviews and further communication with research participants suggest, for many, the choice of non-specialist language is dictated by the fact that the Western 'academic' concepts fail to adequately describe Ukrainian political, social, economic and policy-making 'realities', which are so 'different', 'deviant' or even 'pathological' compared to what is expected to be a national norm or international practice.²⁴

Let us now consider Table 1, which presents two contrasting policy technologies – *post-Communist*, illustrated through the '*Reformation from Above*' and '*Tormenting from Below*' policy cases, and *(neo)liberal*, illustrated through the '*Direct External Pressure*' and '*Indirect External Pressure*' policy models. Table 1 maps out the field of educational policy formation, whereby the elements of both the traditional and new approaches to policy formation coexist, interact and compete for primacy. The traditional top-down approach is described as outdated and in need of modernization, while the neo-liberal approaches are shown in a more favourable light and considered better alternatives; it is expected that they will eventually replace the traditional top-down model. It is also important to note that although Table 1 represents the views of only two research participants, neither of whom is a high-ranking ministerial official, these individuals nevertheless worked in the Ministry and their quotes aptly summarize the ways in which policy initiatives take shape in Ukrainian education.

²³ Cf. Pilkington, H.: *Russia's youth and its culture. A nation's constructors and constructed*, London, New York/NY: Routledge, 1994, p. 199.

²⁴ Cf. Ryavec, K.: *Russian bureaucracy. Power and pathology*, Lanham/MD: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 2005.

Table 1

Post-Communist and (Neo)Liberal Policy Initiation Technologies

I. Post-Communist Policy Initiation Technologies	II. (Neo)Liberal Policy Initiation Technologies
<p data-bbox="347 421 703 454">1.1 'Reformation from Above'</p> <p data-bbox="201 479 850 1285">One model is when someone from the Ministry [initiates policy], and usually, it is the Minister, because in our system the initiative is still punishable, [and therefore] none of the lower-ranking officials will ever propose anything. So if something strikes the Minister's fancy, he will start doing it. The best example is when the former Minister went to Berlin in 2003 and at the Ministers' meeting he suddenly learned that Russia had joined the Bologna Declaration. He was terribly annoyed by this fact, because he knew nothing about the Bologna process. He came back, called an urgent ministerial meeting, and 'pumped up' his subordinates. By December 2003 the programme for Ukraine to join the Bologna process, including the dates, quarters and executives, etc. had been set up. And they even launched it: the credit system, ten universities joined, twenty universities joined, 100 universities joined, etc. So this is one [example of a model] from above. (Interviewee 3, male, <i>International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv</i>)</p> <p data-bbox="347 1397 703 1431">1.2 'Tormenting from Below'</p> <p data-bbox="201 1456 850 1854">I started the gymnasium from the grass-roots initiative. We formed a Public Committee which tormented the local government from below until it finally passed a necessary decision. It is possible to say that sometimes in some localities grass-roots level initiatives have worked, for example, the teaching community on the regional level organized this or that educational establishment. (Research Interviewee 8, male, <i>Directorate of Educational Projects, Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, Kyiv</i>).</p>	<p data-bbox="1011 421 1367 454">2.1 'Direct External Pressure'</p> <p data-bbox="876 479 1501 1122">Another example is the Renaissance Foundation, which has some funding to organize people who want some changes in education. Then we organize expert groups, bring in foreign experts who can tell us how it is done in other countries and who can help analyse our legislature. We study an issue and come up with an initiative. For example, testing: this initiative came from the Renaissance Foundation and for some time the Ministry was against it, but when the Minister found out that Russia had the 'Unified State Exam', Lithuania had it, that is all the countries that want to move forward had it, he became a 'promoter' of this initiative. That is one example [of direct pressure] from external sources. (Interviewee 3, male, <i>International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv</i>)</p> <p data-bbox="1002 1234 1377 1267">2.2 'Indirect External Pressure'</p> <p data-bbox="876 1292 1501 1977">There are also indirect pressures, for example the World Bank project. I witnessed the negotiations which started in 2001, so five years of negotiations, preparations, etc. Then there was a grant from the government of Japan – seven hundred thousand – for technical assistance. This is a World Bank project now, but they always emphasize – we do not interfere – we give money, the government asks – we give money. But it is still a form of pressure and the World Bank is interested in changing the system and this is very good, but at the same time the Bank is interested in being a creditor. And now that not a lot of countries want to borrow from the World Bank, there is this sort of compromise, and this is the indirect pressure. (Interviewee 3, male, <i>International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv</i>)</p>

The above table raises many discourses, including on Soviet-style (post-Communist) and Western (neo-liberal) managerial and administrative practices, rigidity and authoritarian tendencies in the Ministry, the importance of research-based policy decisions advocated by international organizations, the steering effect of World Bank loans on educational policy-making, the revolutionary image of local activists and the difficulties they face in reaching out to the local authorities.

4. Post-Communist policy technology and the (un)importance of public opinion

Let us now examine each of the policy technologies in greater detail and consider how the (un)importance of public opinion is articulated in each of these technologies. In the above table *post-Communist* policy initiation technology is presented as having direct continuity with the Soviet past. The quotation describing the '*Reformation from Above*' model reflects a strong subordination discourse and power hierarchy, which underpin decision-making procedures at the ministerial level. There is a strict institutional hierarchy: initiatives coming from lower officialdom are suppressed and 'punishable', the mode of governance is coercive (the Minister was said to have "'pumped up" his subordinates'), reform initiation is non-transparent and spontaneous ('if something strikes the Minister's fancy'), awareness about global educational developments and debates around them is minimal ('he knew nothing about the Bologna process'), the impetus for reform initiation is that 'all the countries that want to move forward had it' and not necessarily because it is relevant to Ukrainian circumstances. The attitude of the Ministry towards external advice changes from negative to highly positive – to the extent that the Minister becomes a 'promoter' of the external initiative. The main underpinnings behind this change are political, which in education took the form of a new orthodoxy strategy – *voluntary Europeanization*. However, despite the discursive reorientation towards European agendas, policy-making practices cling to their Soviet roots. It is evident in the description of a 'forced' implementation of the Bologna reform, which is similar to the 'show-off' cases of industrial acceleration during Soviet times:

By December 2003 the programme for Ukraine to join the Bologna process, including the dates, quarters and executives, etc. had been set up. And they even launched it: the credit system, ten universities joined, twenty universities joined, 100 universities joined.

However, the demand for subordination by the power hierarchy as a traditional 'hard' form of power is not limited to post-Communist policy technology; it can also be traced in the tension between the authoritative 'I' and 'we' in the '*Tormenting from Below*' model.

The majority of the respondents described the policy-making arena as a social and institutional field, which up until now has preserved many Soviet (authoritarian) principles. The persistence of the 'command-administrative system', which is based on coercion rather than rationalization, is criticized along with the underdevelopment of 'civil society' and the passivity of the practitioners in their unquestioning acceptance of top-down reforms.

The command-administrative system continues to function. Unfortunately, society has not yet developed its civil institutions, civil awareness. The absolute majority of the educators are waiting for these reforms [and] implement the ones which are 'dumped' from above. When the reforms are being prepared on the top, they [top policy-makers] do not feel any need to study public opinion towards implementation of this or that reform because this is how our tradition is. As they say, if you sit high enough you can see far and wide and you can do everything. Therefore, to my deepest regret, these reforms are coming from above and not from the grass-roots level

and that is why we have all these complications. (Interviewee 6, male, Kharkiv National University, Editor-in-chief of the 'Testing and Monitoring in Education' Journal, Kharkiv)

The non-transparent and closed nature of the policy-making process on the ministerial level is presented as another instance of continuity with the Soviet past. Policy decisions passed behind the closed doors of ministerial cabinets, without prior public consultations (which the respondent labelled the 'cabinet character' of policy-making), are seen as major obstacles to educational development because:

All these reforms had 'a cabinet character' ... [In Ukraine] there is no mechanism in place to listen to the representatives of the public and afterwards come to a certain policy decision. (Interviewee 9, male, Ukrainian Centre for Assessing Education Quality, Kyiv)

The tendency to compare policy-making in Ukraine with policy processes in Western countries was the 'common-sense' logic employed in many of the interviewees' accounts. In this comparison, the Ukrainian model is revealed to be inefficient, outdated and in need of long-term strategy and modernization.

Box 1: For example, in the United States ... and in Ukraine ...

For example, in the **United States**, if you have a good suggestion, you usually create a proposal, you send it somewhere, it may get revised or it may not be accepted at all, but basically that's the way you work with it. You know you have something concrete that you want to do, you have a project and you know that this is gonna help, you put together pieces of paper and you send them in. (Interviewee 1, female, *American Council for International Education*, Kyiv)

Here in **Ukraine**, it's a little bit different. And it does not matter how many pieces of paper [you submit]. Actually, the more pieces of paper you send the worse it is, because nobody's gonna read it, because they just don't have the people, they don't have a structure that can actually handle that. So sometimes what you do is you make a suggestion when you are speaking with someone, and maybe three years down the road they will actually come back to you and say: 'Remember when we talked about this or that...?'. Or you continue to make small suggestions, small comments and they might actually become incorporated in the end into something that the Ministry is doing. (Interviewee 1, female, *American Council for International Education*, Kyiv)

Another set of opinions suggests that the relationship between the centralized bureaucracy and civil society is gradually changing. The following quote outlines how the Ministry has come to notice the problem of 'public opinion'.

*The problem is that in the beginning they [the state organs] did not want and did not know that it is possible to hear the public. Even if we say 'the public', some sort of public opinion still exists. So in the beginning they knew: 'We are the Ministry, the organs of the Educational Administration [semantically close to Control]'. Even the word 'to administer' speaks for itself. And this is not only on the level of the Ministry. The same picture is at the lower level of educational administration, when educational authorities want 'to administer' education. So in the beginning there was no mention of civil society. But, in the end, even with great difficulties, civil society in Ukraine is evolving, so then obviously they [the Ministry] had to take public opinion into account. (Interviewee 3, male, *International Renaissance Foundation*, Kyiv)*

However, as the interviewee maintains, being ‘noticed’ does not mean being ‘heard’. Public opinion has become a buzzword appropriated and adapted by the centralized bureaucracy for pragmatic survival purposes. The metaphor of imitation embedded in the following quote captures the relationship between the centralized bureaucracy and liberal discourses, one of which is ‘civil society’:

Ukrainian bureaucracy has learned how to imitate [democracy], that is it catches the discourse and then on the level of rhetoric and slogans proclaims its progressive intentions.²⁵ Yet the system still remains hierarchical, and therefore the more different challenges to the system emerge the more the system strives to constrain them and the more it fails, the more it skids. And the Ministry every so often is preoccupied with constraining what cannot be constrained any further and that’s where this ‘bureaucratic syndrome’ comes from. (Interviewee 3, male, International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv)

To the above criticisms the bureaucracy answers back by suggesting that in post-Communist Ukraine ‘public opinion’ is constantly in the making and therefore cannot be the basis for long-term planning and reforms:

You cannot govern education in such a big country on the basis of public opinion. You have to take public opinion into account, but you cannot base your decisions on it. If we decide on the strategy, for example, student-centred learning, we have to implement this strategy. Maybe we make a step which is not 100% successful, but let’s say 80%, we will still be able to correct it. But if we wait until the public opinion is formed, which will eventually push us toward implementing the change, then we will lag behind more and more. That is, we have to form the segment of public opinion in support of this or that innovation, no doubt here, it will make it easier to implement the change. But if we wait until all public opinion is in support of the initiative – it means being a shepherd and not a leader in this sphere. (Interviewee 9, male, Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Former Top Rank Official, Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, Kyiv)

Moreover, the quote also justifies the state bureaucracy’s right to initiate unpopular or not-so-popular reforms. The state bureaucracy perceives itself as the vanguard of society and public opinion is viewed as contingent and malleable, something to be ‘formed’ and ‘shaped’, something deemed largely unimportant in the policy-making process.

5. (Neo)liberal policy technology and the uses of public opinion

(Neo)liberal policy technology is constructed as the antithesis and critique of the above-discussed post-Communist policy technology. The ‘Direct External Pressure’ and ‘Indirect External Pressure’ models presented in Table 1 reveal how external policy actors such as the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), American Council, British Council, Cambridge Education and others use ‘soft’ forms of power to initiate and legitimize policy initiatives. Although the external actors differ in their agendas and degrees of involvement in national policy-making, there is one major commonality between them. This commonality is the language and logic of (neo)liberalism that guides these agencies. The language articulated by these agencies is the language of expertise, networking, negotiation, debating, diagnosing, calculation and normalization, and their administrative and managerial discourses are usually coated in technical and apolitical terms. This is despite their open political stance as promoters of democracy, an open society and a market economy. For example, in non-political terms, the external agencies define their role in policy-making as ‘fairly administrative’ (Interviewee 1, female, American Council for International Education, Kyiv). The administration

²⁵ Cf. Wilson, A.: *Virtual Politics: Faking democracy in the post-Soviet world*, London: Yale University Press, 2005.

of policy initiatives, i.e. the governmental programmes aimed at shaping the conduct of others, proceeds according to the following scenario. First, the agencies organize 'people who want some changes' into expert groups; second, they invite foreign specialists, who provide expertise on the national legislation; third, they finance selected initiatives suggested by these 'communities of experts'. Through networking and training, local experts are socialized into the common (Western) language of reform, common (neo-liberal) modes of perception, and common approaches to problem formulation and solution-finding. Through these assemblages of terms, techniques, experts and knowledge claims, reality is constructed as something amenable to diagnosis and cure, research and solution, modification and progress.²⁶ In education, the external testing of school graduates reform [standardized examination] is constructed as one such 'cure'.

Another important difference between the technologies is the locus of policy initiation. While the top-down reforms are the initiatives of the Minister alone, reforms initiated by the external agencies have an apolitical character and are presented as outcomes of the analytical work of local 'communities of experts' and informed discussions of 'organized public campaigns':

For example, the Bologna process. The Ministry decided through their top-down directive – everything starts from the top, practitioners do not understand much and everything is done very mechanically. We tried to organize a public campaign and explain what the Bologna process is. (Interviewee 3, male, International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv)

By organizing public campaigns, external policy actors, and in particular the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), invest in making the voice of the local 'communities of experts' heard, or, to use the language of the IRF, 'enhancing the internal capacity for reformation'. Yet although externally influenced policy initiatives are presented as 'the voices' of different 'communities of experts', the 'reform packages' advocated by the external agencies – standardized testing, decentralization, marketization, etc. – do not vary much across post-Communist countries. Hence, the voices of the 'communities of experts' and the 'public opinion' at large are often used to legitimize the 'one-model-fits-all' policy initiatives of the external agencies.

It is significant that despite the pronounced differences between the *post-Communist* and (*neo*)*liberal* policy technologies, the ways these technologies make use of public opinion appear to be rather similar. For example, although the driving force behind the external testing of school graduates reform was the IRF, one of the research interviewees involved in this reform raised doubts that the negative attitudes of the general public towards the reform would affect the implementation of the reform:

I am involved in the external testing reform and I know its many problems. But even up to now we do not know the public's opinion about this reform. I can only guess: it is as if I know it under my skin that the societal attitude towards this reform is negative, but no one cares much about it, no one is interested in public opinion. And on the local level they will continue to implement the reform and on the top they know if the orders are written, they will be implemented. This is all totally wrong. (Interviewee 6, male, Kharkiv National University, Editor-in-chief of the 'Testing and Monitoring in Education' Journal, Kharkiv)

²⁶ Cf. Miller, P. / Rose, N.: *Governing the Present. Administering social, economic and personal life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, pp. 64–65.

6. Concluding remarks

To sum up, inspired by Foucault's discussion of government as the 'conduct of conduct',²⁷ this paper offered an alternative to the mainstream political science analysis. The paper questioned the dominant approach of interpreting the post-1990s developments in post-Communist countries as a crisis of legitimacy of the Communist regimes, which contend with the internal and external pressures of democratization. Viewed from the governmentality perspective, these developments are not conceptualized in liberal-democratic terms as political moves towards greater liberalism and democracy (and hence lesser state interference). On the contrary, the paternalistic role of the national government in a state-led reformation remains strong and tends to intensify in the aftermath of independence, which is reminiscent of the 'shepherd-flock' articulation of pastoral power in Foucauldian terms²⁸.

In that case, how can we interpret the post-1990s developments from a governmentality studies perspective? Moving beyond the speculations about the unitary direction of regime change from Communism towards either *liberalism*, '*pluralism by default*'²⁹, '*feudalism*'³⁰ or '*competitive authoritarianism*'³¹, governmentality studies focus on the heterogeneous and multifaceted present-day practices and rationalities of government. These practices are not seen as representing steps to successive types of society (more liberal – more advanced), but as inevitably (intentionally or unintentionally) encompassing both authoritarian and liberal tendencies and thus are likely to manifest various states of domination and prospects for 'freedom' as defined within the existing power relations.³² Viewed from this perspective, the 1990s signalled a crisis of Communist governmental rationalities – i.e. the mentality of government, but not governmental practices (the actions of government). Authoritarian practices of government as the 'conduct of conduct' have managed to endure the changing line of reasoning about how the government should be exercised. The discourse of the (un)importance of public opinion provides an example of this argument.

Viewed from the perspective of governmentality studies, educational policy-making was conceptualized as a governmental activity (yet not always state-dominated) aimed at reshaping the 'conduct of conduct' of post-Communist countries and their citizens. The analysis revealed two distinct approaches to initiating policy in Ukraine, namely the *post-Communist* and (*neo*)*liberal* policy technologies, which in their own ways deem public opinion largely insignificant in the process of policy formation and implementation. The discussion presented here offered insight into the changing relationship between the centralized educational bureaucracy and civil society. The argument maintained that the ongoing engagement of this 'unexpected nation'³³ with neo-liberal models of capitalism and democracy has triggered the emergence of new, often externally influenced, political and educational discourses. However, the shifts in discourses have not (yet) brought change to existing Soviet-type institutional cultures and decision-

²⁷ Foucault, M.: Governmentality, in: Burchell, G. / Gordon, C. / Miller, P. (eds): The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 87–104.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Way, L.: 'Pluralism by Default and the Sources of Political Liberalization in Weak States', presented at the conference *Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism*, Mexico City, 1–4 April 2004, 2003, Princeton University, 23 October 2003, Yale University Leitner Lecture Series, 25 March 2003.

³⁰ Verdery 1996.

³¹ Levitsky, S. / Way, L.: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2002 (Vol. 13), No. 2, pp. 51–65.

³² Cf. Dean, M.: *Governmentality. Power and Rule in Modern Society*, London: Sage Publications, 1999.

³³ Wilson, A.: *Virtual Politics: Faking democracy in the post-Soviet world*, London: Yale University Press, 2005.

making practices. As a result, the governance of present-day Ukrainian education is exercised through a rigid centralized bureaucracy, while discourses of democratization, decentralization and public involvement in policy formation are nevertheless also becoming prominent.

Appendix

Table 2

Research Participants

Interviewee's Designation	Interviewee's Gender	Interviewee's Affiliation
International Organizations		
Interviewee 1	female	American Council for International Education, Kyiv
Interviewee 2	male	Cambridge Education, Cambridge, UK
Interviewee 3	male	International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv
Academia		
Interviewee 4	female	Testing Technologies Centre at the Ministry of Health, National Medical University of O.O. Bohomolets, Kyiv
Interviewee 5	male	Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv
Interviewee 6	male	Kharkiv National University, Editor-in-chief of the 'Testing and Monitoring in Education' Journal, Kharkiv
Ministry of Education and Science		
Interviewee 7	male	Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, former top-ranking official, Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, Kyiv
Interviewee 8	male	Directorate of Educational Projects, Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, Kyiv
Centre of Educational Quality Assessment		
Interviewee 9	male	Ukrainian Centre for Assessing Education Quality, Kyiv
Interviewee 10	female	Regional Centre for Assessing Education Quality, Lviv
Unions, Associations, NGOs and Professional Media		
Interviewee 11	male	National Union of Teachers, Kyiv
Interviewee 12	female	Ukrainian Association of School Heads, Head of a Specialized School, Kyiv
Interviewee 13	female	Professional Newspaper for School Administrators, Kyiv

In-Service Teacher Training Institutes, Local Educational Authorities and Teachers		
Interviewee 14	female	In-Service Teacher Training Institute, Lviv
Interviewee 15	female	District Educational Authority, Tsyurupynsk, Kherson region
Interviewee 16	female	General Secondary School of I-III levels, Tsyurupynsk, Kherson region

Websites:

www.education.gov.ua – The Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science

www.rada.gov.ua – Official website of the Ukrainian Parliament

www.testportal.com.ua – Ukrainian Centre for Assessing Education Quality