

Educational Policy

Code: 101159
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Sociology	OT	4

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Teachers

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

- Preferably, students should have a background on education (in subjects such as sociology of education, education sciences or economics of education).
- It is highly recommended to have passed the course Sociology of education.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course aims at:

- Introducing a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives to examine education policy reform, processes, contents and outcomes; and equipping students with knowledge and analytical skills for the understanding of education policy in different contexts.
- Developing a global governance approach to policy analysis and familiarizing students with an international perspective to education policy change (focus on international organizations, international case studies and international databases).
- Developing a thorough understanding of the social, economic and political dimensions of education policy.
- Applying these perspectives in a range of education levels (basic education, higher education, vocational education) and impact dimensions (education equity, efficiency, learning, innovation, etc.).
- Stimulating interest in further study of education policy and awareness of the complex, interdisciplinary and, at times, controversial nature of education policy analysis.

After the successful completion of the course, the students will be able to:

- Critically analyse the goals and strategies of education policy reforms, as well as their public policy impact in a range of dimensions (human rights, equity, development, etc.).
- Understand and recognize the main actors and processes shaping education policy at different levels.
- Understand the complexity and conflict that surround policy-making and policy implementation.
- Develop critical thinking and analysis, and communicate effectively, through a basic level of English, the analysis of social phenomena and policy interventions.
- Develop work-in-group skills and aptitudes.

Competences

- Analysing the problems arising from the implementation of public policies and conflict situations by recognising the complexity of the social phenomena and political decisions affecting democracy, human rights, social justice and sustainable development.
- Applying the concepts and approaches of the sociological theory, specially the explanations of social inequalities between classes, between genders and between ethnic groups, to the implementation of public policies and to the resolution of conflict situations.
- Assessing the contributions of sociological approaches to the study of culture, education, interaction between society and environment, social policy, and work.
- Demonstrating a comprehension of the approaches of the sociological theory in its different aspects, interpretations and historical context.
- Describing social phenomena in a theoretically relevant way, bearing in mind the complexity of the involved factors, its causes and its effects.
- Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
- Effectively communicating the basic analysis of social phenomena in an elementary level of English.
- Generating innovative and competitive proposals in research and professional activity.
- Searching for documentary sources starting from concepts.
- Students must be capable of managing their own time, planning their own study, managing the relationship with their tutor or adviser, as well as setting and meeting deadlines for a work project.

Learning Outcomes

1. Comparing the different theoretical approaches about education.
2. Defining the appropriate sociological concepts in order to interpret the educational and school phenomena.
3. Developing critical thinking and reasoning and communicating them effectively both in your own and other languages.
4. Distinguishing sociological concepts concerning education adopted by the actors involved in the educational system.
5. Distinguishing the explanations of educational inequalities between classes, between genders and between ethnic groups that these actors take for granted.
6. Distinguishing the social interpretations of education according to these approaches.
7. Distinguishing the underlying educational phenomena of specific policies or conflicts.
8. Distinguishing the underlying social phenomena of educational policies and conflicts.
9. Effectively communicating the basic analysis of social phenomena in an elementary level of English.
10. Expressing the debates regarding these approaches, that refer to education.
11. Generating innovative and competitive proposals in research and professional activity.
12. Relating the concepts, methods and techniques used to analyse education with general theoretical and methodological debates.
13. Relating the debates regarding these approaches, that refer to education, with the historical context in which they emerged.
14. Searching for documentary sources starting from concepts.
15. Students must be capable of managing their own time, planning their own study, managing the relationship with their tutor or adviser, as well as setting and meeting deadlines for a work project.

Content

1. Thinking critically about education policy
 - 1.1. The political sociology of education.
 - 1.2. Theories on the role of the State in education.
 - 1.3. The formation of education systems and education regimes.
 - 1.4. The governance paradigm: the role of non-state actors in education.
 - 1.5. Sociological approaches to the analysis of education policies.
2. Globalization and education policy
 - 2.1. Theoretical approaches to the globalization and education relationship.
 - 2.2. Global mechanisms and education policy influence.
 - 2.3. The role of international organizations:
 - 2.3.1. The World Bank: the power of lending and the monopoly over ideas.
 - 2.3.2. OECD: governance by numbers.
 - 2.3.3. UNESCO: moral authority and its limits.
 - 2.4. The emerging private authority in education policy: transnational civil society and corporate power.
 - 2.5. Case study: the PISA phenomenon.
3. Policies and programmatic ideas in education reform
 - 3.1. Privatization and quasi-markets in education.
 - 3.2. School choice and zonification.
 - 3.3. National and international assessments.
 - 3.4. New public management reforms: autonomy and accountability.
 - 3.5. Teachers in education reform.
 - 3.6. Vocational and technical education as a development tool.
4. Impact dimensions of education policy
 - 4.1. Funding and efficiency.
 - 4.2. Student achievement: outcomes and outputs.
 - 4.3. Inequalities along social, gender and ethnic lines.
 - 4.4. Social cohesion, inclusion and diversity: the segregation problem.
 - 4.5. Innovation and diversity.
 - 4.6. Teacher professionalism.

Please note that the syllabus may change slightly during the course of the academic year. Changes will be discussed in advance and announced to the students. For the latest version, it is advised to consult the course handbook distributed to students the first day of the class.

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
In-class exercises	15	0.6	14, 1, 9, 3, 5, 4, 10, 11, 15, 12
seminars	23	0.92	1, 2, 3, 5, 4, 7, 8, 6, 10, 12, 13
Type: Supervised			
tutorials	30	1.2	9, 15

Type: Autonomous

autonomous work and study	75	3	14, 1, 9, 2, 3, 5, 4, 7, 8, 6, 10, 11, 15, 12, 13
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This class is structured as a student-centred, collaborative course, which places great emphasis on the role of peers in the learning process. Thus, students are expected to come to class having completed all the readings, to enhance discussions by sharing their experiences and insights every session, to pose questions and to engage with the contributions of their classmates.

The course is structured according to four types of activities that will follow different methodological principles:

- Theoretical classes organized around the lecturer presentation but that are open to the intervention and participation of students.
- Practical sessions (debates around the readings, documentaries and other multimedia materials, and practical exercises to solve problems).
- Tutorial meetings to provide feed-back and guidance, organized on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.
- Autonomous activities by the students (both individual and in group) such as reading the course texts or writing the assignments.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class presentation	15	1	0.04	1, 9, 2, 3, 5, 4, 8, 6, 10, 15, 13
Exam	40	2	0.08	1, 2, 5, 4, 7, 8, 6, 10, 12, 13
Group essay	30	2	0.08	14, 9, 3, 10, 15, 13
in-class assignment and participation	15	2	0.08	14, 1, 9, 2, 3, 8, 6, 10, 11, 15

Students will be assessed according to criteria based on an individual final exam; a group assignment; an oral presentation; and in-class presentation. The structure of the final grade is the following:

- Final exam: 40%
- Group assignment: 30%
- Presentation in class: 15%
- Exercises and participation in class: 15 %

Other remarks relative to assessment:

- Students need to pass each of the components to pass the course.
- Students with an average mark below 5 will be able to do a recovery exam.
- If plagiarism is detected in a written input, it will be given the mark of 0.

This subject contemplates the possibility of a single assessment, which will be done with the final exam, which has a competitive nature and covers all the thematic blocks of the subject

AI. Allowed use: In this subject, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is allowed as an integral part of the development of the work, provided that the final result reflects a significant contribution by the student in the analysis and personal reflection. The student must clearly identify which parts have been generated with this technology, specify the tools used and include a critical reflection on how these have influenced the process and the final result of the activity. The lack of transparency in the use of AI will be considered a lack of academic honesty and may lead to a penalty in the grade of the activity, or greater sanctions in serious cases.

Bibliography

1. Thinking critically about education policy

Essential readings

- Carnoy, M. (1982). Education, economy and the State (pp. 79-126). In M. Apple (Ed.), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education. Essays on Class, Ideology and the State*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Dale, R., & Robertson, S. (2009). Beyond methodological 'ISMS' in comparative education in an era of globalisation. In R. Cowen and A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International Handbook of Comparative Education* (pp. 1113-1127). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Rizvi, F. and Lingard, B. (2010). Conceptions of education policy (pp. 1-21) In *Globalizing Education Policy*. London: Routledge.

Recommended readings

- Cairney, P. 2011. Introduction: theories and issues (pp. 1-20). In *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Klees, S. J. 2008. Reflections on theory, method, and practice in comparative and international education. *Comparative Education Review* 52(3), 301-328.
- Pawson R., & Tilley N. *Realist Evaluation*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Verger, A., Novelli, M., & Altinyelken, H. (2018). Global Education Policy and International Development: A Revisited Introduction. In *The Handbook of Global Education Policy* [2nd edition] (pp. 1-32). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- West, A., & Nikolai, R. (2013). Welfare regimes and education regimes: Equality of opportunity and expenditure in the EU (and US). *Journal of Social Policy*, 42(3), 469-493.
- Williams, J.A. (1997). The Diffusion of the Modern School. In W. Cummings & N. McGinn (Eds.) *International Handbook of Education and Development: Preparing Schools, Students and Nations for the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 119-136). Oxford, New York, Tokio: Pergamon/Elsevier Sciences.

2. Globalization and education policy

Essential readings

- Grek, S. (2009). Governing by Numbers: the PISA effect in Europe. *Journal of Education Policy* 24(1), 23-37.
- Heyneman, S. P. 2003. The history and problems in the making of education policy at the World Bank 1960-2000. *International Journal of Educational Development* 23, 315-337.
- Mundy, K., Green, A., Lingard, B., & Verger, A. (2016). Introduction: The globalization of education policy-key approaches and debates. *The handbook of global education policy*, 1-20.

Recommended readings

- Ball, S. (2009). Privatizing education, privatizing education policy, privatizing educational research: network governance and the 'competition state'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(1), 83-99.

- Bhanji, Z. The Business Case for Transnational Corporate Participation, Profits, and Policy-Making in Education. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The Handbook of Global Education Policy* [2nd edition] (pp. 419-432) Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Breakspear, S. (2012). *The Policy Impact of PISA: An Exploration of the Normative Effects of International Benchmarking in School System Performance* (OECD Education Working Papers, 71). Paris: OECD.
- Carnoy, M. 1999. Chapter 3: Globalization's impact on educational reform strategies (pp. 37-46). In *Globalization and Educational Reform: What Planners Need to Know*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Jones, P. (1999). Globalisation and the UNESCO mandate: multilateral prospects for educational development. *International Journal of Educational Development* 19, 17-25.
- King, K. (2007). Multilateral agencies in the construction of the global agenda on education. *Comparative Education*, 43(3), 377-391.
- Lawn, M., & Lingard, B. (2002). Constructing a European policy space in educational governance: the role of transnational policy actors. *European Educational Research Journal* (2), 290-307.
- Mundy, K., & Murphy, L. (2001) Transnational advocacy, global civil society? Emerging evidence from the field of education. *Comparative Education Review*, 45(1), 85-126.

3. Policies and key ideas in education reform

Essential readings

- Addey, C., Sellar, S., Steiner-Khamsi, G., Lingard, B. & Verger, A. (2017). The rise of international large-scale assessments and rationales for participation. *Compare*, 47(3), 434-452.
- Rizvi, F. (2016). *Privatization in Education: Trends and Consequences* (Education Research and Foresight Working Papers, 18. Paris: UNESCO.
- Verger, A., Fontdevila, C., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Reforming governance through policy instruments: How and to what extent standards, tests and accountability in education spread worldwide. *Discourse*, 40(2), 248-270.

Recommended readings

- Allais, S. (2012). Will skills save us? Rethinking the relationships between vocational education, skills development policies, and social policy in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32(5), 632-642.
- Ball, S. J., & Youdell, D. (2008). Hidden privatisation in public education. Brussels: Education International.
- Kamens, D. H. and McNeely, C. L. (2010). Globalization and the growth of international educational testing and national assessment. *Comparative Education Review*, 54(1), 5-25.
- McGrath, S. (2012). Vocational education and training for development: A policy in need of a theory? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 32(5), 623-631.
- Paine, L., & Zeichner, K. (2012). The local and the global in reforming teaching and teacher Education. *Comparative Education Review*, 56(4), 569-583.
- Robertson, S. L. (2016). The global governance of teachers' work. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lingard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *The Handbook of Global Education Policy* [2nd edition] (pp. 375-290) Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Valiente, O. (2014). The OECD skills strategy and the education agenda for development. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 39, 40-48
- Verger, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2018). Test-based accountability and the rise of regulatory governance in education: a review of global drivers. In A. Wilkins and A. Olmedo (Eds). *Education Governance and Social Theory: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Research* (pp. 139-158). London: Bloomsbury.

4. Impact dimensions of education policy

Essential readings

- Subrahmanian, R. (2005). Gender equality in education: definitions and measurements. *International Journal of Educational Development* 25, 395-407.

- UNESCO. (2018). Setting out a conceptual framework for measuring equity in learning. In *Handbook on Measuring Equity in Education* (pp. 16-45). Paris: UNESCO.
- Zancajo, A., & Bonal, X. (2020). Education markets and school segregation: a mechanism-based explanation. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. Published ahead-of-print.

Recommended readings

- Bonal, X. (2012). Education policy and school segregation of migrant students in Catalonia: The politics of non-decision-making. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(3), 401-421.
- Colclough, C. (2012). Education, poverty and development-mapping their interconnections. *Comparative Education*, 48(2), 135-148.
- Lubienski, C. (2003). Innovation in education markets: theory and evidence on the impact of competition and choice in charter schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 395-443.
- MacDonald, K. (2016). Calls for educating girls in the Third World: futurity, girls and the 'Third World Woman'. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(1), 1-17.
- Nusche, D. (2009). *What Works in Migrant Education? A Review of Evidence and Policy Options* (OECD Education Working, 22). Paris: OECD.
- Verger, A., Bonal, X., & Zancajo, A. (2016). What Are the Role and Impact of Public-Private Partnerships in Education? A Realist Evaluation of the Chilean Education Quasi-Market. *Comparative Education Review*, 60(2), 223-248.
- Waslander, S., C. Pater, and M. van der Weide. 2010. *Markets in Education: An Analytical Review of Empirical Research on Market Mechanisms in Education* (OECD Working Papers, 52). Paris. OECD.

Software

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Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	51	English	first semester	afternoon
(TE) Theory	51	English	first semester	afternoon