

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching,
Learning and Teacher Education

Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher
Education

2018

What Does an Anthropologist of Educational Policy Do? Methodological Considerations

Edmund T. Hamann

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, ehamann2@unl.edu

Thirusellvan Vandeyar

University of Pretoria, thiru.vandeyar@up.ac.za

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Other Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Hamann, Edmund T. and Vandeyar, Thirusellvan, "What Does an Anthropologist of Educational Policy Do? Methodological Considerations" (2018). *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education*. 356.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/356>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

What Does an Anthropologist of Educational Policy Do? Methodological Considerations

Edmund T. Hamann¹ and Thirusellvan Vandeyar²

¹ University of Nebraska-Lincoln

² University of Pretoria

The Three Pieces of Educational Policy: An Introduction

Although Margaret Mead (Hughes, 1952; Mead, 1961), Manuel Gamio (1916), and other leaders of 20th-century anthropology often made pronouncements regarding what schooling should and shouldn't do—in essence proposing to be educational policymakers of a sort—the turn of anthropology to the study of policy and particularly education policy is relatively new (Shore & Wright, 1997). It follows that what an anthropologist of educational policy *implementation* should do is therefore not yet depicted all that clearly or in detail. The groundbreaking work of Sutton and Levinson (2001) and their contributing authors in some senses stands out as an important exception to that claim, but its task was more to theorize why this subfield should develop rather than to explicate particular methodological “moves,” although it does often accomplish the latter. (See in particular Quiroz [2001] and Sutton [2001] for lengthier treatments of methodology.)

Published (as Chapter 3) in Angelina Castagno & Teresa McCarty, eds., *The Anthropology of Educational Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp 43-61. Copyright © 2018 Taylor & Francis.

The easiest way to illuminate what an anthropologist of educational policy implementation does is to share examples of it, and most of this chapter is constituted by autobiographic depictions of three cases—the first from Thirusellvan Vandeyar’s study of technology education policy implementation in South Africa and the second two from Edmund “Ted” Hamann related to the creation of a novel binational educational project in Georgia (USA) and to Maine’s and Puerto Rico’s implementation of a short-lived federal education initiative known as the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR/D) project. Before turning to those examples it is worth clarifying how we understand both education policy and its implementation from a theoretical standpoint.

While the book that this chapter forms a part of has “education policy” in its title but not “implementation,” we hold onto both terms—i.e., policy and policy implementation—for conscious reasons. As Erickson and Gutierrez (2002) once pointedly wrote, “A logically and empirically prior question to ‘Did it work?’ is ‘What was the “it”?’ ‘What was the “treatment” as actually delivered?’” (p. 21). It is our view that what policy *is* cannot be understood apart from what policy *does*; in other words, it becomes constituted through its implementation. In this sense policy and policy implementation are the same thing. However, popular and mainstream uses of the term policy (e.g., McGuinn, 2015; see in particular the quote by Daniel Weisberg on p. 4—“Race to the Top required them to go beyond policy to actually be the implementers”) often do not include this *doing* dimension. Instead policy is perceived to be a plan, particularly a formal plan and the related problem definitions and strategies entwined in that plan, while implementation is something separate. This naturalizes a hierarchy distinguishing planners and doers that under-acknowledges implementers’ roles in shaping what is done. It also leaves us a dilemma; we could say policy and risk its misinterpretation as the plan, as something that *is* rather than something that *does*, or we could be more precise, if prospectively redundant, and say *policy implementation*. We have opted to do the latter.

To further clarify, policy implementation is not just another word for practice. Rather, as we have outlined elsewhere (Hamann et al., 2007; Hamann & Rosen, 2011), policy has three constituting elements: a problem diagnosis, strategy(ies) for that/those problem’(s)

resolution, and a sensibility of what a better world would be. Acknowledging that these can be formally espoused to greater or lesser degrees (Argyris & Schon, 1975), that they can range from apt to wildly off target, that they usually embed and create assumptions about hierarchy and power, and that they can vary in terms of how well they reconcile with each other, these are nonetheless the constituting epistemic frames that an anthropologist of educational policy implementation should be looking for.

To put these in terms of one of the cases we share below, what problem or problems has South Africa been trying to solve with technology education? What are the strategies selected and pursued to resolve these problems (including consideration of who is selecting/identifying those strategies)? Who was presumed to lead and who was expected to follow? And what has been the imagined possible world that identifiers of the problems and articulators of the strategies hope to bring into being? What does the new “better” entail? To the issue of whether this is anthropological, it is worth quoting the American Anthropology Association’s (n.d.) definition of anthropology, which summarizes: “A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems.”

As a final theoretical point, if one accepts the definition of policy that we share above, then one must also accept that policy is inevitably and intrinsically a cultural production. To borrow from Geertz (1973, p. 5), there are “shared webs of meaning” regarding what is, what can be, and what should be that shape what policy as practiced entails (even if “shared” does not mean fully, homogeneously, and equivalently shared [Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003]). Those *is*’s, *can be*’s, and *should*’s are further informed by both the material constraints of the implementation environment and the broader flow of ideas about education and structure that have given rise to remarkably similar institutions (i.e., schools) in starkly different nations and geographies (Hamann, Vandeyar, & Sanchez Garcia, 2013). So, depending upon the reader’s preferred taxonomy, the task of the anthropologist of educational policy implementation is to identify and analyze the extant problem diagnoses, pursued strategies, presumed structures, and imagined better worlds of those who make/perform educational systems or to gather and scrutinize the *is*’s, *can be*’s, and *should*’s. The question is: How?

We offer three purposefully varied sketches of how we have tried to do just that. While we selected the mini-cases partially because we can — these are cases we know well — and partially because they allow readers to consider multiple varied illustrations, we have particular reasons for tracing each instance. The South Africa case highlights how the people and cosmologies tied together by policy implementation can nonetheless be dramatically distinct, with federal policy makers attempting to borrow ideas from abroad (such as outcomes-based education), while more local implementers face challenges of expedient resource allocation and the not-necessarily-aligned questions of: What can I do? And, what should I do? The case of an educational response to Mexican newcomers to Georgia highlights that policy can have grassroots and unconventional points of origin concurrent with top-down ones, but it also points out that site selection and negotiation of access are part of methodology. The third CSRD case reminds us that the task of adapting to context occurs not just in classrooms and similar “final” implementation sites, but also happens in intermediate tiers as with the conversion of federal policy to state-level implementation.

The first two mini-cases share the fact that they were dissertation projects. They differ, however, in the strategies of entree used and available to each researcher. Vandeyar could gain sustained access to South African classrooms because that is where he had spent 20 years of his professional life prior to pursuing his doctoral degree. In contrast, Hamann’s access to the Georgia research site where he considered the development of a novel and unprecedented binational partnership that linked demographically fast-changing school districts to a consulting university in Mexico was as a grant writer. In the third case — state-level CSRD implementation — Hamann’s charge as a research and evaluation specialist at a federally supported regional education laboratory meant he was expected to work with state education agency personnel and they with him.

Noting that many readers of this chapter will likely include graduate students pondering master’s theses and doctoral dissertations, we share these accounts for one more reason: to pass along the advice that new researchers should ask themselves. What are the accounts both worth relating and that I am in a position to tell?

Mini-Case 1: South African Technology Education from Policy to Practice

The purpose of this study was to explore how education policy for information and communication technology (ICT) influenced teaching and learning in South African schools, although our purpose in relating it here is more to explain how this topic was studied. Understanding *appropriated* to mean “the ways that creative agents interpret and ‘take in’ elements of policy, thereby incorporating these discursive resources into their own schemes of interest, motivation, and action – their own ‘figured worlds’” (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 779) – the study investigated how teachers and various policy intermediaries appropriated South African national e-education policy in their teaching and learning.

So, not surprisingly, teachers and principals were the primary sources of data. The second author (Vandeyar) interviewed teachers in face-to-face semi-structured interviews and observed their classroom practice as they used ICT to teach (and sometimes adapt) the prescribed curriculum. He analyzed written artifacts, such as teachers’ resource documents, lesson plans, and learners’ books. He also interviewed school principals (mainly for in-depth case histories of the research sites and for triangulation) and collected additional documents related to school-level policies and histories. At the more systemic district and province levels, data collection with “policy intermediaries” (Hamann & Lane, 2004) entailed face-to-face interviews, plus the analysis of formal ICT policy pronouncements.

So, utilizing a social constructivist lens and guided by a theoretical framework of a sociocultural approach to policy analysis (Levinson & Sutton, 2001), this exploratory qualitative research study set out to investigate how teachers in South African schools appropriated education policy on ICT. The case study included three schools from diverse sociocultural settings, with two participating teachers at each of the identified research sites. The principal at each school and e-learning specialists (officials) at the District and Provincial Departments of Education constituted additional data sources. Data collection methods included interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and document analysis. Constructivist grounded theory methods (Mills, Bonner,

& Francis, 2006) and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) were employed in the analysis of data.

The focus on teachers and schools was not accidental and reflected both interest and access (points returned to in the other two cases). When South Africa integrated its normal schools (teacher education programs) into its universities in the late 1990s, which was after the advent of democracy (the end of apartheid is referred to as the advent of democracy), the previous tradition of education research being carried out by social scientists (rather than teacher educators) remained intact and, to the present, it remains the case that most South African researchers who study education topics do not have a previous background as practitioners. Vandeyar, however, does have such a background, and this project allowed him to use that background as a resource and a correction to South Africa's historic (and not uncommon) privileging of researcher perspectives *instead of* (rather than *with*) practitioners.

Vandeyar's personal interest in ICT integration had arisen from his own practitioner experience. As a principal of a school that was transitioning after apartheid from being an "Indian" school to one that served increasing numbers of Black African students, he had been concerned that teachers were reluctant to use ICT even though his school had two computer laboratories and made computers available for administrative use by teachers. One of the computer centers was even developed and financed totally through a huge commitment by the school governing body. In other words, as a practitioner, he had concurred with the emergent problem diagnosis that ICT needed to be part of the school program, even if the "how" and "for what" remained vaguely defined.

As a school leader restless with his school's practice, he then observed that other previously disadvantaged schools (i.e., those lower in the apartheid stratification) that had computer centers were using computers for so-called "computer literacy" (rudimentary tasks such as keyboarding, that matched rote tasks that predated the adoption of computers), while schools that were more advantaged (such as the former Model C schools [Carter, 2012; Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2015] that had permission to supplement public support with parent fees and thus could expend much more per student and prevent enrollment of those with limited means) were beginning to exploit the potential use of ICT by integrating it into curriculum delivery. Thus, his

emerging thinking included considerations of power and advantage/disadvantage. Then, Vandeyar's own knowledge base in policy implementation grew through seminar coursework in policy studies during his years as a Ph.D. student. This came after he had followed the Computer Integrated Education sequence in completing his master's degree, which exposed him to academic debates in the field of ICT/e-learning. All of this is to say that from personal experience with practice and then professional preparation in computer integrated education and policy studies, he was fortuitously positioned and prepared to investigate a topic just like the one he took on.

Much research on ICT implementation has been based on the nature and focus of the national ICT policy (e.g., Kearns, 2002; Plomp et al., 2009), the rationale for introducing ICT into schools (Hawkrigde 1990), the application of ICT in teaching and learning (Becker, 2000; Cuban, 1998), teacher training and changed pedagogy (Kozma & Anderson, 2002), and ICT infrastructure and access (Ferrell & Wachholz, 2003). However, there has been very little research on how education policy on ICT is implemented in schools and districts, or how those charged with converting problem diagnoses, recommended strategies, and visions of a supposedly better future understood their tasks and possibilities within those charges.

To understand what educators did and how ICT policy was actually implemented requires a bit of background. In South Africa the national Department of Education (DoE) introduced an e-education policy in the early 2000s with the formal intention of changing teacher pedagogy and learner achievement through the use of information and communication technology. The policy aimed to "transform learning and teaching through information and communication technologies" and thus to contribute to the economic growth and social development of the country (Department of Education, 2004). The ambitious basic propositions of the policy were that, through ICT, schools would improve their level of functioning, teachers would change their pedagogies, and student learning would improve.

The ICT policy was just one in a barrage of new education policies for schools (Sayed & Jansen, 2001) that came after South Africa's first (post-apartheid) national democratic elections in 1994. A goal of many of these efforts was to "democratise education" (Gansen & Christie, 1999). In 1997, a comprehensive reform called Curriculum 2005 with the philosophical paradigm of "outcomes-based education" (OBE)

underpinned the new education system. (See Desmond [1996] for an account of the American origins and early implementation of OBE.) Teachers were situated at the heart of this new policy initiative, as they had to implement the new curriculum innovation and adopt new policy-mandated methods for teaching and learning.

In 2002, another curriculum reform was initiated by the federal government. Called the revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Department of Education, 2002), it too embraced the tenets of OBE. However, neither Curriculum 2005 nor the NCS made actual provision for the use of ICT (Blignaut & Howie, 2009), and the core curricula did not provide guidelines on ICT in teaching and learning. Learning outcomes were not aligned with the use of ICT (Vandeyar, 2013), although, rather vaguely, the NCS did encourage curriculum integration, where appropriate, in order to achieve educational outcomes. In Jansen's (2002) terms, the South African government had produced policy as "political symbolism" without "implementation" as its primary commitment. That was clearly the case of these consecutive national curricula as pertaining to ICT.

Ultimately, the Technology Enhanced Learning Initiative (TELI) of the DoE was the first initiative to provide a planning document that introduced guidelines for the integration of technologies into teaching and learning at educational institutions (Howie et al., 2005), but this came after many schools had already identified the need to implement ICT in their teaching and learning practices (as further described below). Official national policy then came well after local processes – including local problem diagnoses, strategies, and senses of what should be – were well under way. Moreover, even with TELI, the *hows* of implementation remained vague. One district official offered this interpretation of the district's role in translation of national policy to teacher's classroom practice:

[C]ompulsory is not the language that I would like to use, I would rather say it's a guideline. And we've got to find a way of, you know, making the teachers' find sense in using it. It's my responsibility as a coordinator to make sure schools buy into it ... I must take it to the school and show them how our policy document looks, touch it and get to know it. (Vandeyar, 2015, p. 353)

In 2010, the minister of education announced yet another educational reform, “Curriculum 2025” (DBE, 2011), which implied further changes to curriculum delivery. That reform largely postdates this study except to the extent that it is a reminder that before, during, and after the study period, teachers were still subject to dramatic, “yo-yoing” changes in how and for what purpose they were to teach ICT (and other subjects).

These yo-yoing policy directives occurred in real time as international, national, and local physical infrastructure and expectations for technology were also in flux. Computers had been introduced in South African schools during the 1980s, primarily in independent schools and some well-resourced public schools (Howie et al., 2005). Since then, ICT has become commonplace in most schools, albeit large discrepancies in resources and infrastructure remain. A reason for this broader adoption is that political rhetoric and government policy have advocated for teachers to use computers regardless of the context that practitioners in particular and that schools in general found themselves (Pandor, 2007; Surty, 2007). Yet, the use of ICT in schools and its integration into teaching and learning has also had wide public and educational appeal, as illustrated by the continued inclusion of ICT purchases even at schools with very tight budgets (Evoh, 2007). This has meant schools both wanted and needed to develop their own ICT policies often faster and to greater detail than federal policy guidelines themselves entailed. Understanding ICT implementation as originating with federal policy or primarily being shaped by it would be misleading; much of the *de facto* authorship has been much more local.

Vandeyar found that teachers’ professionalism and agency were crucial in formulating and implementing a school-based e-education policy in practice. National policy was largely invisible within the school context. Rather, teachers positioned themselves as social and cultural actors of school-based policy appropriation and formulation rather than as recipients of national mandates. In turn, a lack of systemic support to teachers acted as the catalyst for the emergence of communities of practice between schools. A notion of “our” system as opposed to an imposed system prevailed. Ultimately, South Africa went from lacking a national ICT policy to having several consecutive ones that were not viewed as viable or particularly relevant at the local level. This left intact dramatic variations in when, how, and how much technology were integrated into instruction.

As a former practitioner versed in computer-integrated education, Vandeyar was particularly well positioned to collect data on these topics. Like Toma (2000), he was a practitioner, by identity and background, if no longer by job description. Unlike many South African education researchers, he knew the rhythm of schools and could build solidarity with both teachers and principals, concurrently making himself someone who would likely have less of a distorting impact on the classroom practice he observed (i.e., less posturing or defensive behavior by teachers) and who would receive greater candor and depth in responses. That he gathered more nuanced information from teachers than district or provincial bureaucrats further reflects his biography. Schools were an environment he much preferred to government offices (and were relevant spaces for the question of what was policy as actually delivered).

Mini-Case 2: Development of Local Education Policy for Latino Newcomers

As a doctoral candidate in 1996, Hamann moved to Georgia as an accompanying spouse, when his partner began graduate school there. This may seem like an odd first point to make in a mini-case, but, if an antecedent to the methodological question of *how* to study something is *what* to study, then it is worth reasserting that what we study is a function of *what we can* study. If readers want to know how to study policy implementation, then how to find and access a research setting is part of the methodology.

With the larger locale already chosen by circumstance (i.e., Georgia), Hamann, who was ABD in 1996, needed to find a research site where he could pursue his interests and demonstrate his competence while building his expertise. These tasks brought their own challenges. Hamann had not lived in Georgia, he had few contacts there, and his graduate school mentors had little leverage to help him gain access to possible research sites. He first sought help from the Georgia Department of Education, more specifically the Migrant Education and Title VII program offices. These choices were not accidental. Hamann had already been a consultant and grant evaluator for various minor initiatives of these offices at the Kansas Department of Education, when he was working on his M.A. He knew that these kinds of offices worked

with the kinds of schools and programs that he was interested in.

As Levinson and Holland (1996) have noted, anthropologists of education face a paradox: to gain access to schools and school systems we need those who work there to give us access, yet those who can give us access may well fear becoming targets of our critiques. This risk is presumably greater if extant practice or at least extant outcomes are problematic in some way in those settings. So these gatekeepers can be understandably reluctant to allow entree to those who might write critically about what they find. One task of the researcher, then, is to win and not abuse the confidence of those who can give us access. Yet we also have responsibilities to our fellow researchers, to the public, and to those in our research sites who might be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged because of what is happening at those sites.

Hamann gained access to what became his research site because he could offer key constituents there something they wanted. He could reciprocate the extension of access (what he wanted) with sharing of expertise, specifically grant-writing support. When he approached the Georgia Department of Education, he explained to one of the administrators there that he had already majored in education and Latin American Studies as an undergraduate; he had taught (and written some grants) for two years in an experimental bilingual family literacy program that almost exclusively worked with Mexican immigrant families; and he had written an M.A. thesis in anthropology that examined how bilingual paraeducators brokered between Kansas classrooms and Spanish-speaking newcomer households. The Georgia Department of Education's coordinator of Title VII and Migrant Education remembered Hamann several months later when she fielded an inquiry from Dalton Public Schools (DPS) about whether she might know someone who could help that district write a "Title VII-Systemwide Bilingual Education Grant." The coordinator thought she knew just such a person and put DPS leaders in touch with Hamann.

Hamann remembers being a little surprised that a school district in Southern Appalachia wanted to pursue systemwide bilingual education, but was assured by his lead DPS contact that she had done some inquiring and had a colleague in another Georgia district who had convinced her that this was what DPS would want. So Hamann found himself with a \$2000 contract (and a preliminary agreement that DPS could become a place that he studied) to help DPS find funds to support a then hazily sketched, incipient, prospective binational

collaboration that would link DPS — which was negotiating a surge in Latino enrollments because of changing employment patterns in the local carpet industry — with the Universidad de Monterrey (UdeM), a private university in Mexico. DPS had been connected to that university by a local business leader whose company did business with a Mexican industrial conglomerate that, in turn, was led by members of a family with close ties to UdeM. How to attend to this complexity began as a grant-writing task that later served “double duty” regarding how to study a policy implementation effort.

While he describes what unfolded next at much greater length elsewhere (e.g., Hamann, 2002, 2003, 2004), the next salient parts that matter here are how his introduction framed who he gathered information from and what more particular questions his research could be directed at. It seems straightforward that those interested in Latino education and the prospect of longstanding patterns of education inequity being reproduced in new locales that lack long Latino immigration histories should interview, observe, or otherwise collect data from those same Latino newcomers. But that is not what emerged as Hamann’s particular research angle. Instead, recognizing that he needed to talk with school and district leaders and other leaders in both Georgia and Mexico to write a strong needs assessment and to compellingly describe what the project was that they envisioned, he realized that the data he was collecting illuminated how local education leaders made sense of and responded to demographic change. That too was an important object of study (and an example of “studying up” [Nader, 1969]). He was witnessing and, in the role of grant writer, helping to articulate the local educational policy response to both arriving Latino newcomers and the new interplay between them and the populations that had longer been stakeholders in DPS praxis. That was the account he could tell.

In addition to the initial foray of collecting information for the grant proposal, which secured \$500,000 for the district, in his 15 months of subsequent dissertation fieldwork (and three years of post-dissertation continued involvement), Hamann interviewed local carpet industry entrepreneurs who led the “Georgia Project Committee”; he interviewed and observed DPS educators who participated in any of several successive summer travel study experiences in Monterrey, Mexico that were intended to help DPS employees better understand the school and community contexts from which so many of their new

students and parents were coming; and he interviewed, surveyed, and observed all members of the first two cohorts of what were called the “visiting instructors.” These were Mexico-born and -schooled educators recruited through UdeM to work in one-, two-, and three-year stints in DPS in extra support of the Mexico-background students who, by 2001, had become the district’s majority population (after counting for just 4% of enrollment as recently as 1989). In short, Hamann positioned himself to consider the problem diagnoses of those most consequentially powerful locally to develop the educational response to changing demographics; he studied the strategies pursued to attend to the identified problems (e.g., the travel-study in Mexico, the use of visiting instructors from Mexico, the convening of a project oversight committee constituted of local business leaders); and he got to consider what new/better world the policy promulgators were proposing to create.

The study showed that expertise from the Global South, in this case from researchers based in Mexico, could be welcome and sought after by American school districts (at least for a time). It highlighted how a comparatively small city and county in Southern Appalachia was nonetheless tied to global migration flows and that, thus, its school systems were facing unprecedented challenges of how to work with students and parents whose first language was Spanish and whose previous experiences with schools were often in Mexico. It highlighted how a particular community leader, a former U.S. congressman-turned-judge-then-attorney, could mobilize a massive education effort when more conventional education policy sources were slow to act. And it highlighted an important tenet of ethnography’s commitment to holism; as a researcher Hamann systematically surveyed, interviewed, and/or observed stakeholders from various backgrounds and with various roles who all shared a link to the multifaceted Georgia Project initiative. He was able to be welcomed as a researcher by his willingness and capability to take on additional, locally salient roles.

Mini-Case 3: State Education Agencies as Policy Intermediaries

Our third mini-case describes implementation of the U.S. federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration project, sometimes called Obey-Porter, per the last names of the Democratic and Republican

congressmen who successfully championed it into existence in 1997, and sometimes abbreviated as CSRD. Like our first mini-case, this one connects federal education policy to more local implementation, but this time the focal point of the policy implementation continuum is at the state education agency (SEA) level rather than at the school or district level. In this case the examined SEAs are the Maine Department of Education and Puerto Rico Department of Education. Like both previous studies, it too reflects what the researcher was best positioned to tell.

In both Maine and Puerto Rico Hamann's work was not ethnographic in the conventional or formulaic sense. He (and some colleagues) were not present only as researchers (although the role as researcher examining implementation was explicit), nor were field notes generated every evening (although sometimes they were). Rather, per Nader (1969) and updated by Eisenhart (2001), Hamann and his colleagues used "multiple and eclectic" data collection strategies — observations, interviews, archive review in multiple settings and multiple types of settings (e.g., federal CSRD trainings in Washington DC hotel ballrooms, school site visits in rural Puerto Rico, and carpool conversations returning from a school to a parking lot along the turnpike). But our work was ethnographic in the most important sense; in line with Erickson's (1984) reminder of the centrality of holism, everyone we studied in Maine and Puerto Rico was connected through their links to the CSRD program.

In 1999, with his newly minted doctorate in hand, Hamann accepted a "soft money" position at Brown University to join the federally funded Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory. (Soft-funded positions reference those for which employment is contingent on grant funding continuing.) The LAB at Brown, as the regional educational laboratory was called, was funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), which has since been replaced by the Institute of Education Sciences. Per the charges for the federal regional educational laboratories, the LAB at Brown was to engage in applied educational research in its local region — the six New England states, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands — that was supposed to be concurrently ameliorative locally and more broadly relevant to other sites within and beyond the region. Within that larger charge, the LAB at Brown was asked in 1998 to help its states (and Puerto Rico) initiate and then provide research support for

CSR implementation. This meant that the initial logistic support for launching CSR that the LAB at Brown provided preceded Hamann's arrival, but also that studying and assisting CSR's implementation was still quite new when he arrived. Just as Hamann's role with the previously noted Georgia Project was not only as a researcher, here too he faced logistic tasks above and beyond generating scholarship. Phrased another way, he had multiple reasons to be involved.

The premise of CSR imagined whole schools, rather than individual teachers, or classrooms, or content areas, or grade levels, as the unit for professional development and reinvention. It originated partially from the "effective schools" research in the 1970s (e.g., Edmonds, 1979) that observed that some schools were "high performing" (to use contemporary vernacular) even though their enrollments concentrated students from backgrounds (e.g., students of color, low-income students) that U.S. schools too often have poorly served. A second origin was Ted Sizer's (1984, 1992) Coalition of Essential Schools. That effort argued that comprehensive high schools were too often large, bureaucratic, alienating, and not academic spaces that needed to be reimaged into smaller schools where students studied fewer subjects in greater depth, allowing teachers (who would have reduced student loads through this reimagining) to know their students well. These ideas were later coupled in 1988 and more comprehensively in 1994 to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorizations that required schools with high low-income enrollments to become "Title I schoolwide" and to craft related schoolwide school improvement plans.

While Hamann did not know all of this federal education policy history when he came to the LAB at Brown, he had studied under Sizer in the 1980s as a Brown University undergraduate and he had joined Dr. Sizer and various classmates on a number of site visits to high schools in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, and Delaware that were considering joining the Coalition of Essential Schools. Moreover when Hamann taught in Kansas City in the early 1990s, that Sizer background had meant that he was invited to join a consortium of local educators who were looking at the Coalition and more generally at whole school change. So it was logical when Hamann came to the LAB at Brown to connect him to the CSR work. It was also understandable that Hamann was soon assigned to engage in CSR work in Puerto Rico and Maine.

As is more thoroughly detailed elsewhere (e.g., Hamann & Lane, 2002, 2004; Hamann, Lane, et al., 2001; Hamann, Pineiro, et al., 2001), the actual inquiry was conducted concurrent with offering other kinds of support. For example, the LAB at Brown helped the Puerto Rico Department of Education create a fair for school reform models and that meant Hamann's colleagues created extensive notes (that Hamann could later review) about which school reform model developers had both the interest and capacity to support Puerto Rican schools' selection of their program. It also meant Hamann went to Puerto Rico twice in 2000 to offer workshops to grant recipients on program evaluation.

Puerto Rico is a small island about 1500 kilometers southeast of the U.S. mainland, and Spanish is the legally recognized first language of the commonwealth, although the island is officially bilingual. It is worth noting this physical and linguistic geography, because not all school reform model developers had support materials and professional development capacity in Spanish; nor could all models operate at a large enough scale on the island to justify the transport costs. Thus, the market logic embedded in CSRD (in which schools were to be able to shop for the model that best fit their interests and needs) was much more compromised in Puerto Rico than when compared to most other implementation sites.

To generate a policy implementation study for Puerto Rico required looking at colleagues' notes from the model fair, working with Puerto Rico-based LAB at Brown personnel, and keeping field notes on the evaluation workshop experience. Hamann also borrowed from economic theories of markets and political ecology to explain unusual constraints encountered by program propagators on the island and atypical steps, such as the reconceptualization of a local math/science curriculum reform as a whole-school reform to be able to include/support a local model provider.

In Maine the LAB team's efforts were more enduring and intensive. There we learned of Maine's successful attempt to modify CSRD expectations — restricting it only to the high school level and attaching to an otherwise unfunded new state blueprint, called *Promising Futures* (Maine Commission on Secondary Education, 1998) — by working with the state personnel charged with implementing CSRD and *Promising Futures*. In helping the Maine Department of Education

(MEDOE) as external evaluators of CSR implementation, by making school visits with MEDOE personnel, by participating in state-organized professional development for CSR/*Promising Futures* schools, and by collecting successful and unsuccessful CSR funding applications, we realized we were first-hand witnesses to the policy interpretation and policy re-authoring – the *doing* of policy-engaged in by SEA policy intermediaries. We carefully say “re-authoring” because much of what actually was the CSR program in Maine, the call for proposals, the proposal evaluation criteria, the implementation management, the reporting requirements for recipient schools, the organization of regional and statewide professional development, and more, were all crafted at the state level.

Returning to the American Anthropology Association’s (n.d.) definition of anthropology, we collected knowledge in service of human problems. That positioned us to ask whether the problem diagnoses embedded in CSR and the embedded solutions actually fit Maine and Puerto Rico very well, but it also positioned us to see that Erickson and Gutierrez’s (2002, p. 21) concern with “the ‘treatment’ as actually delivered” required attending to what is usually overlooked. Puerto Rico had had to negotiate a diminished program and had attempted to partly compensate by adding a local model (however ill-suited to federal program parameters), and Maine made even more dramatic “reauthoring changes.” Appraising the efficacy of CSR in either place without attending to the particularities of what CSR was because of the SEAs in those jurisdictions would be fraught and misleading.

Ultimately, we recognized that complex and relevant processes were occurring in the settings that we were part of, and that, if scrutinized, those processes might reveal what problems various stakeholders were actually trying to solve, which strategies they thought might solve them, and what visions of better practice and better outcomes were in circulation. In relation to the larger project of figuring out how education policy might create more efficacious practice, we had a vantage point on a part of the implementation and reauthoring that is inevitable, but rarely considered, and to which anthropology was well suited as an analytic orientation.

Advice for Anthropologists of Educational Policy Implementation

There is an old (and likely apocryphal) tale of the social science graduate student who finds herself trapped between the advice of the psychologist on her committee who urges her to develop her research question so she can get out into the field and the anthropologist on her committee who tells her to get into the field so that she can figure out what question she might viably and productively pursue. In this dilemma, our sympathies are with the anthropologist advisor. We are uncomfortable with a question that predates entry to the field because it means that the researcher might miss “what is really happening” by trying to document just what it is that they have already decided to look for. But our sympathies are not only with the anthropologist. In a nod to the psychologist’s perspective, Hamann went about looking for a research question in Georgia related to the education of Latinos and to social justice. The particulars were usefully vague before he moved there, but he was not “starting at zero.” He had some sense of what he wanted to study.

Transcending the dichotomy proposed above, we also assert a two-part additional consideration. First, researchers should ask, “What, transactionally, might I bring to the research environment that is of use to those in that environment?” That question need not be answered as dramatically as the \$500,000 in federal grant funding (although that does not hurt), but it is important to remember that, in exchange for the researcher’s gain (a dissertation completed, a degree secured, a peer-reviewed publication assisting the march to tenure), others, who we might call research subjects, but who also merit the less research-centric label of “policy implementation stakeholders,” should gain something of direct benefit, too. The second additional consideration is to ask, “What story can I tell?” Or, if one does not want to see one’s anthropological inquiry as “just storytelling,” “What relevant-to-the-field account and analysis am I best positioned to generate?”

Vandeyar brought to the ICT implementation question the empathetic background of a practitioner who posed the question not initially with the scholarly goal of “generating new knowledge,” but with the more pragmatic consideration, “given how much we are spending (from relatively tight budgets) and what is possible through the

introduction of technology, how do we change what *might be* to what *is*?” Similarly, Hamann knew and saw that the dominant input/output inquiry paradigm related to work as complex as education policy implementation was so simplifying that it was dramatically distorting. The only way to consider whether CSRD worked was to get closer to what CSRD was.

In the case of Maine, did CSRD work because of the insight and political support added to it by coupling it with *Promising Futures*? What did a claim that it worked or didn’t work really mean? One of the things Hamann (2005) later claimed about Maine CSRD implementation is that it “moved the default”; it literally changed (modestly to be sure) the logic and purpose of how and for what ends high school was practiced in Maine. Because of the coupling of CSRD with *Promising Futures* and then the later and related coupling of *Promising Futures* with an initiative funded by the Gates Foundation, approximately 45% of Maine’s high schools successfully solicited support for *Promising Futures-related* school change and more than two-thirds went through at least one grant application process where they endeavored to reimagine themselves in line with *Promising Futures*. What happened, what the treatment was as actually delivered, could not have been depicted absent Hamann’s (and his colleagues’) sustained, experience-near, and multi-vantage-point depiction of those holistically linked through CSRD from federal program creation to classroom practice.

In all three mini-cases there were problem diagnoses to be identified and scrutinized, strategies for the identified problems’ resolution to be chronicled and weighed, and various ideas regarding what was supposed to become. In all three cases a formal governmentally constituted policy framework was part of the story — federal South African ICT policy, federal American Title I and Title VII policy, and federal American CSRD policy — but in none of the cases were these the primary or singular explanations for what was actually done. To anthropologically understand policy implementation in each of these three cases much more centrally required being present to record the knowledge that was being assembled to attend to human problems. That is what the anthropology of education policy implementation is designed to study. Using a range of tools, we look at what did happen and what various stakeholders said was supposed to happen. That makes for engaging, fun, and relevant work.

References

- American Anthropology Association (n.d). *What is anthropology?* Retrieved May 19, 2016 from <http://www.americananthro.org/>
- Argyris, C., & Schon, D.A. (1975). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Becker, H. J. (2000). Findings from the teaching, learning and computing survey: Is Larry Cuban right? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(51). Retrieved May 19, 2016 from: <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/442>
- Blignaut, S., & Howie, S. (2009). National policies and practices on ICT in education: South Africa. In T. Plomp, R. Anderson, N. Law, & A. Quale (Eds.), *Cross-national information and communication technology: Policies and practices in education* (pp. 653–670). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Carter, P. L. (2012). *Stubborn roots: Race, culture, and inequality in U.S. and South African schools*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Cuban, L. (1998). How schools change reforms: Redefining reform success and failure. *Teachers College Record*, 99(3), 453–477.
- Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011). *Action plan to 2014: Towards the realization of schooling 2025*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Basic Education.
- Department of Education (South Africa). (2002). *Revised National Curriculum Statement grades R-9 (schools)*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Education.
- Department of Education (South Africa). (2004). *White paper on e-Education*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Printing Works.
- Desmond, C. T. (1996). *Shaping the culture of schooling: The rise of outcome-based education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37, 15–23.
- Eisenhart, M. (2001). Educational ethnography past, present, and future: Ideas to think with. *Educational Researcher* 30(8),16-27.
- Erickson, F (1984). What makes school ethnography “ethnographic”? *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 15(1), 51-66.
- Erickson, F, & Gutierrez, K. (2002). Comment: Culture, rigor, and science in educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 31(8), 21-24.
- Evoh, C. J. (2007). Collaborative partnerships and the transformation of secondary education through ICTs in South Africa. *Educational Media International*, 44(2), 81-98.
- Ferrell, G., & Wachholz, C. (2003). *Meta-survey on the use of technologies in education in Asia and Pacific, 2003-2004*. UNESCO Bangkok. Retrieved November 22, 2008 from <http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=1807>
- Gamio, M. (1916). *Forjando patria (pro nacionalismo)*. Mexico, DF: Libreria de Porrúa Hermanos.

- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gutiérrez, K D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher*, 32(5), 19-25.
- Hamann, E.T. (2002). ¿Un paso adelante? The politics of bilingual education, Latino student accommodation, and school district management in southern Appalachia. In S. Wortham, E. G. Murillo, & E. T. Hamann (Eds.), *Education in the new Latino diaspora: Policy and the politics of identity*. (pp. 67-97). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Hamann, E. T. (2003). *The educational welcome of Latinos in the New South*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Hamann, E. T. (2004). The local framing of Latino educational policy. *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*. 16, 37-51.
- Hamann, E. T. (2005). Systemic high school reform in two states: The serendipity of state-level action. *High School Journal* 89 (Oct.-Nov.), 1-17.
- Hamann, E. T., Anderson, K. S., Levinson, B. A., Cannella, C., Pollock, M., & Wright, S. (2007). *Educational policy as a matter for anthropologists' scholarly and applied engagement: Report of the Council on Anthropology and Education's Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Policy*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved June 18, 2015 from http://www.aaanet.org/sections/cae/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/CAE_AdHoc_Committee_Anthropological_Engagement.pdf
- Hamann, E. T., & Lane, B. (2002). *We're from the state and we're here to help: State-level innovations in support of high school improvement*. Providence, RI: Education Alliance at Brown University. Retrieved January 29, 2016 from: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/631>
- Hamann, E. T., & Lane, B. (2004). The roles of state departments of education as policy intermediaries: Two cases. *Educational Policy*, 18(3), 426-455.
- Hamann, E. T., Lane, B. & Hudak, M. (2001). *CSRD roll-out in Maine: Lessons from a statewide case study*. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. Retrieved January 29, 2016 from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/461>
- Hamann, E. T., Pineiro, O., Lane, B., & Smith, P (2001). *Lessons and possibilities: Notes regarding CSRD in Puerto Rico*. Providence, RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University. Retrieved January 29, 2016 from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/47/>
- Hamann, E. T, & Rosen, L. (2011). What makes the anthropology of educational policy implementation “anthropological”? In B. A. Levinson & M. Pollock, (Eds.), *A companion to the anthropology of education* (pp. 461-477). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hamann, E. T, Vandeyar, S., & Sanchez Garcia, J., (2013). The anthropology of organizations applied to schooling in three countries (the United States, South Africa, and Mexico). In D. Caulkins & A. Jordan (Eds.), *A companion to organizational anthropology* (pp. 519-537). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hawkrige, D. (1990). Computers in third world schools: The example of China. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 21(1), 4-20.

- Howie, S. J., Muller, A., & Paterson, A. (2005). *Information and communication technologies in South African secondary schools*. Pretoria, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Hughes, E. C. (1952). The school in American culture. The Inglis Lecture, 1950. Margaret Mead. *American Journal of Sociology*, 57(4), 404. doi: 10.10861220993
- Jansen, J. D. (2002). Political symbolism as policy craft: Explaining non-reform in South African education after apartheid. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(2) 199-215.
- Jansen, J. D. & Christie, P., (Eds.) (1999). *Changing curriculum: Studies on outcomes based education in South Africa*. Kenwyn, South Africa: Juta & Co. Ltd.
- Kearns, P. (2002). *Towards the connected learning society: An international overview of trends in policy for information and communication technology in education*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Science, and Training.
- Kozma, R., & Anderson, R. (2002). Qualitative case studies of innovative pedagogical practices using ICT. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 18(4), 387-394.
- Levinson, B. A., & Holland, D. (1996). The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In B. A. Levinson, D. E. Foley, & D. C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice* (pp. 1-54). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Levinson, B. A., & Sutton, M. (2001). Policy as/in practice: Developing a sociocultural approach to the study of educational policy. In M. Sutton & B.A.U. Levinson, (Eds.) *Policy as practice: Toward a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy* (pp. 1-22). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Levinson, B.A.U., Sutton, M., & Winsted, T. (2009). Education policy as a practice of power: Theoretical tools, ethnographic methods, democratic options. *Educational Policy*, 23(6), 767-795.
- Maine Commission on Secondary Education (1998). *Promising Futures: A call to improve learning for Maine's secondary students*. Augusta, ME: MEDOE.
- McGuinn, P. (2015). *Evaluating progress: State education agencies and the implementation of new teacher evaluation systems*. White Paper (#WP2015-09). Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.
- Mead, M. (1961). Questions that need asking. *Teachers College Record*, 63(2), 89-93.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(1). Article 3. Retrieved March 10, 2017 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_1/pdf/mills.pdf
- Nader, L. (1969). Up the anthropologist—Perspectives gained from “studying up.” In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Reinventing anthropology* (pp. 284-311). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

- Pandor, N. (2007, January 9). E-learning in South Africa. Address by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor MP, at the World Ministerial Seminar on Technology in Education: Moving Young Minds. Retrieved 14.02.07, from <http://www.polity.org.za/article/pandor-ldquoelarning-in-south-africardquo09012007-2007-01-09>
- Plomp, T., Anderson, R. E., Law, L. & Quale, A. (Eds.). (2009). *Cross-national information and communication technology: Policies and practices in education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Quiroz, P. A. (2001). Beyond educational policy: Bilingual teachers and the social construction of teaching “science” for understanding. In M. Sutton & B.A.U. Levinson (Eds.), *Policy as practice: Toward a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy* (pp. 77-99). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Sayed, Y., & Jansen, J. D. (2001). Introduction. In Y. Sayed & J. D. Jansen (Eds.), *Implementing education policies: The South African experience* (pp. 1-11). Landsdown, South Africa: UCT Press.
- Shore, C., & Wright, S. (1997). *Anthropology of policy: Critical perspectives on governance and power*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Sizer, T. R. (1984). *Horace’s compromise: The dilemma of the American high school*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Sizer, T. R. (1992). *Horace’s compromise: Redesigning the American high school*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Surty, M.E. (2007, July 4). Address by the deputy minister of education, at the Intel Education – Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Classroom Conference, Grey College, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Retrieved August 24, 2010 from <http://www.gov.za/e-surty-intel-education-ict-classroom-conference>
- Sutton, M. (2001). Policy research as ethnographic refusal: The case of women’s literacy in Nepal. In M. Sutton & B.A.U. Levinson (Eds.), *Policy as practice: Toward a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy* (pp. 77-99). Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Sutton, M., & Levinson, B.A.U. (Eds.) (2001). *Policy as practice: Toward a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy*. Westport, CT: Ablex.
- Toma, J. D. (2000). How getting close to your subjects makes qualitative data better. *Theory into Practice*, 39, 177-184.
- Vandeyar, T. (2013). Practice as policy for education: Catalysing communities of practice in education in South Africa. *Technology in Society*, 35, 248-257.
- Vandeyar, T. (2015). E-learning policy intermediaries and the reform of e-education in South Africa. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 46(2), 344-359.
- Vandeyar, S., & Vandeyar, T. (2015). *The construction, negotiation, and representation of immigrant student identities in South African schools*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

