

Impact Sheet

Aguilar, M. S. & Castaneda, A. (2022). Out of the public eye: Researching political factors that influence the implementation of research knowledge as part of educational reforms and mathematics textbooks. *Implementation and Replication Studies in Mathematics Education*, 2(1), 109–127. DOI: 10.1163/26670127-bja10001

1 Problem Addressed

The implementation of any educational innovation is shaped by political factors. This is, it is influenced by the values, interests and even ideologies of individuals and groups with the ability to exercise power in the public life of a society. However, although the importance of recognizing the political in implementation research has been pointed out by some educational researchers (e.g., McDonnell & Weatherford 2016), much of the political action takes place far from the public eye, making its analysis complicated. This paper reports an exploratory study focused on identifying political factors that have the potential to shape the content of educational reforms and mathematics textbooks that are officially authorized for use in the lower secondary education system in Mexico.

2 What Is Achieved?

There are two main contributions of this paper. First, the paper illustrates the application of a conceptual framework proposed by McDonnell and Weatherford (2016). This framework partitions an implementation process into two phases called the *politics of enactment* and the *politics of implementation*, but also distinguishes three cross-sectional characteristics of these two phases, namely: time frames, decision venues, and interest-based coalitions. The conceptual framework is used to give meaning and structure to an in-depth interview with a key informant — an insider standing between the culture of research in mathematics education and the culture of educational reforms and mathematics textbooks in Mexico. His narratives constitute the main source of empirical data for this study.

Second, the paper identifies three different political factors that have the potential to influence the implementation of research-based knowledge from the field of mathematics education: (1) the opposition of interest-based coalitions; (2) the distribution of non-explicit guidelines and diffuse information that is subject to varied interpretations by different stakeholders; and (3) the compatibility between the proposed mathematical contents and the current political agenda.

3 Implications and Significance

The significance of this paper lies in that it underlines the influence that different political forces can exert throughout a process of defining and implementing an educational innovation. The paper is an addition to other studies that illustrate aspects of the interaction between policy and the implementation of innovations in mathematics instruction (e.g., Prytz, 2021). This kind of study highlights the importance of having a better understanding of the political factors that influence the implementation of innovations in mathematics education.

The study reported in the paper contributes to shedding light on the political dynamics that take place behind the scenes and that can influence the implementation of research-based knowledge and innovations produced in the field of mathematics education.

References

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