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Exploiting globalization while being exploited by it: Insights from post-Soviet education reforms in Central Asia

Exploiter la globalisation tout en étant exploité par cette dernière: un aperçu des réformes éducatives post soviétiques en Asie Centrale

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Abstract

Building on an examination of comparative and international literature and their research and development experiences, the authors highlight a number of continuities, changes, and issues between Soviet and post-Soviet, international and Central Asian experiences of borrowing and lending of education reforms. Even though Central Asian actors and institutions are not totally helpless victims and though international experts and NGOs appear well-meaning in these globalizing education transfers, the processes are leading toward reproducing global and local dependencies and inequalities. The trajectory of education reforms in Central Asia echo those of other developing countries. In response, the authors urge local policy makers and comparative educators to join in a critical and reflexive strategic venture of re-encountering and reshaping the global and neoliberal offers to serve the needs of interconnected local and global justice.

Resumé

Les auteurs de cet article discutent le transfert et l'appropriation des réformes éducatives soviétiques et post soviétiques en Asie centrale. Ils se basent sur une étude comparative et internationale de la recherche en la matière et sur des expériences de développement afin d'évaluer les points communs et les changements entre les différentes réformes. Même si les acteurs et les institutions d'Asie centrale ne sont pas tout à fait des victimes sans recours, et que les experts internationaux et les ONG paraissent être bien intentionnés en cherchant à intensifier les transferts éducatifs globaux, ces processus reproduisent des dépendances et des inégalités entre pays riches et pauvres. La trajectoire des réformes éducatives en Asie centrale est la même que celle d'autres pays en voie de développement. Les auteurs cherchent de ce fait à ce que les décideurs politiques locaux et les spécialistes en éducation comparative travaillent en conjoint afin d'évaluer et de refaçonnent de façon critique et réflexive les propositions globales et néolibérales qui cherchent à répondre aux besoins d'une justice globale et locale de plus en plus interconnectée.

Keywords: globalization; Central Asia; neoliberalism; borrowing and lending

Mots-clefs: globalisation; Asie centrale; néolibéralisme; transfert et appropriation

Introduction and method

This article builds on the scholarly literature on globalization, aid, and education in Central Asia (e. g., De Young, Reeves, & Valyaeva, 2006; Silova, 2011; Steiner-Khamsi, Silova, & Johnson, 2006), our own research on, and professional engagement with post-Soviet education in Central Asia in general and Tajikistan in particular (e.g., Niyozov, 2001-2012; Niyozov & Dastambuev, 2010), and a limited number of interviews with the educators representing public and international agencies in Tajikistan. We also examine the broader literature on globalization, culture, and education in developing countries (e.g., Chisholm & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009; Klees, 2008; Popkewitz & Rizvi, 2009; Silova, 2010). The key concern of the article is that the current (post-Soviet) globalization has been leading Central Asian education systems and societies to reproduce their dependence on external forces with serious implications for their societies'

futures. They have moved from being dependent consumers of Soviet outside-in, top-down policies and practices to becoming similarly dependent consumers of western-led, neoliberalist, top-down, outside-in reform policies and practices.

There is a debate on whether globalization and neoliberalism are or are not the same things/phenomena. We are of the view that while globalization may be inevitable and even desirable, neoliberalism is not and should not be its only face and outcome. Globalization is a product of human minds and actions. It is an outcome of the human's evolutionary/historical journey (social, economic, technological, cultural, and ideological). There is a need to de-monopolize and de-essentialize the discourse of globalization. Honest exposition of the contradictory nature and trends in globalization and its destructive and constructive sides is long due in Central Asia. In addition to drawing insights from the past and outside, new social imaginings should be produced for the post-socialist, post-neoliberal globalized world. Human history has seen many globalizing efforts not simply sequentially, but simultaneously. The recent existence and struggle between communist/socialist and capitalist systems was but one of such historical examples of competing globalizing discourses. The current, post-Soviet globalization is an outgrowth of the unprecedented intensification and extensification of cross-border interactions and flows between humans (as individuals, communities, nations, interest groups, transnational agencies), and human products (goods, ideas, technologies, cultures). Globalization's type, however, is not just due to the speed and volume. Its nature is based on the purposes these interactions and flows serve, the forms they take, their consequences on humans, institutions, ecology, the solutions they engender, as well as whom they simultaneously benefit and marginalize. In other words, there are various globalization discourses, contingent their actors' contexts, power, knowledge, and ethics. Apart from human capital, these include social-democratic, trans-nationalist, religious, human rights, Freirian, and environmentalist globalization discourses (Spring, 2006).

We, however agree that post-Soviet globalization has been dominated by neoliberalism, which has tried to move the former Soviets as far as possible away from socialism and Soviet style system. Yet, neoliberal globalization's penetration into Central Asia has also been mediated, indirect, and hegemonic. While neoliberals claim that their globalization version has benefited all (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000), anti-neoliberalists (e. g., Marxists, anti-colonialists, culturalists) argue that neoliberalist globalization has exposed the global alliance between the globally-situated exploiters (disguised under terms such as cosmopolitans, executives, high class, elite, corporations). These elites, while employing nationalist, religious, and even egalitarian rhetoric, in reality, apply neoliberal approaches to enrich on the expenses of their own and global working and middle classes, minorities, and women (Bourdieu, 1999). Post-colonialists and world system theorists (Adams, 2008; Spring, 2006; Tikly, 1999), have added that while some globalization trends have enslaved the world economically, and have eroded local cultures, epistemologies, and lifestyles, its other trends have served as venues for local cultures (such as Uzbek folklore, see Adams, 2008) to reach global audiences. In sum, globalization in its various manifestations (i.e., neoliberal, social democratic, socialist, Islamic, pan-nationalist, culturalist) is a social construct mediated by various contextual influences and employed to serve diverse agendas. Further, despite its qualitative difference based on the unprecedented technological advancement, current globalization is not the only one in human history. Central Asian societies, by the way, have been at the heart of some of the historical globalizing movements, such as Silk Road, spread of Buddhism, Islam, and socialist discourse (Nanji & Niyozov, 2002). Across its history, Central Asian rulers, policy-makers, and

practitioners have been able to use globalizing trends and opportunities to serve their personal and communal interests (Adams, 2008). To that end, even current neoliberal globalization's impact on Central Asian economies and societies has been variegated (Spechler, 2004). Although neoliberalism has not been fully able to make these societies hopeless servants of global corporate capitalism (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2006), its decontextualized policies, often accepted uncritically, may render the countries of Central Asia continually dependent, their development trajectories vulnerable, and education systems detrimental to their citizens' hopes, dignities, and ambitions.

Key Goal and Structure

Central Asian education systems have been a focal point of the forces of globalization, subjected, as they are, to an ever-expanding post-socialist reform package (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). The dominant agenda behind the international agencies' and donors' involvement in post-Soviet education reform has been the development of human capital for the global market (De Young et al., 2006; Shagdar, 2006). This has included the remaking of the former Soviet and post-Soviets' subjects' bodies, minds, and sentiments to favour neoliberal capitalism, rather than enabling them decide who they want to be and what their societies should look like.

Yet, our overview of cases from Central Asian education systems in this paper shows the complex processes of adoption, adaptation, hybridization, glocalization, replacement, and rejection of the externally lent and borrowed policies and practices. The outcomes confirm many of the lessons of international and development education about the need for knowing histories and contexts, for being reflexive, for dialogue rather than intellectual arrogance, and for going beyond populist rhetoric (Farrell, 1994). Our discussion here also corroborates Silova and Steiner-Khamsi's (2008), Steiner-Khamsi et al.'s (2006) findings that Central Asian policy-makers and practitioners are not helpless victims, but exhibit agency in reshaping what globalization offers. Notably, the values and purposes of the agents on both sides of the policy lending and borrowing are not always benign and progressive. Left unchecked, they could serve neo-colonial, but also parochial, selfish, and discriminatory purposes. In such cases the neoliberal policies become triply oppressive, benefiting global corporations, international agencies and local emerging capitalists at the expense of local poor in the name of whom policies, practices, and moneys are borrowed and lent.

Subsequently, this article's conclusions urge Central Asian and international educators, donors, and development experts to (a) expose globalization's both creative and destructive possibilities; (b) not present travelling policies as perfect solutions; and (c) acknowledge and examine their complicity in promoting neoliberalism and its effects on Central Asian educations and societies. The strategic aim is to repulse neoliberalism and reshape globalization into more equitable and dialogically beneficial process. The key to this is to develop Central Asian capacities for knowledge analysis, production, and self-criticism, and establish transnational alliances and networks that can enable Central Asians to succeed in re-encountering globalization and developing alternative epistemologies and solutions relevant to local social problems: alternatives that are based on the synthesis, not rejections and otherisation.

Following the introduction, the article describes some distinct features of globalization's march into Central Asia, including the neoliberal education reform package. Then it briefly presents examples from general and higher education in Central Asia on globalization's (including neoliberal) projects, their goals, implementation processes and outcomes. Next, two detailed cases, involving more than a single transformation from Tajikistan are discussed. We

end with implications for how to support Central Asian education and development policy-makers and practitioners re-encounter globalization strategically (i. e. by developing locally relevant and independent knowledge and solutions), and ethically (i. e., by not abusing it to reproduce internal discrimination and inequalities).

Situating globalization's march into Central Asia: neoliberalism behind sweet words

For the last 20 years, Central Asia, once a showcase of socialist development (Myer, 2009), has been undergoing painful transformations. The official narratives of post-Soviet development emphasize progress towards economic prosperity, multiparty democracy, cultural revival, national unity, and ideological harmony. The alternative (internal and external) stories warn about failing states, characterized by the deepening poverty, inequalities, instability, ethnic and religious radicalization, authoritarianism, corruption, external debt, dependency, and neocolonialism (De-Cordier, 2002; Heathershaw, 2011; ICG, 2009, 2012; World Bank, 2005). The Central Asian predominantly centralized, state-run, and donor-dependent education systems are expected to enforce the success story, yet operate within the challenges highlighted in the alternative narratives.

The historical and contextual conditions of globalization's march into Central Asia illuminate the current status and future trajectory of educational and societal developments in the region. First, even though Central Asian political and intellectual elites moved from *reforming* socialism and communism in the 1980s to *abandoning* them in the 1990s, they and the common citizens were overwhelmingly uncertain about what their post-socialist reality would look like. Their current constitutional self-descriptions as secular, democratic, and unified nation states are far from reflecting their unstable realities and unpredictable futures. Embittered by the many real and projected failures of their socialism, the majority of Central Asians, especially the youth, continues to believe that anything from the West was better than what they have had in the past. The projected and real destructive situations of the neighbouring Islamic states (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran), have made Central Asian elites wary of embracing Islamic alternatives.

Admittedly, globalization did bring symbolic political, cultural, and economic independence (at least from Soviet/Russian domination); diversity of ideological perspectives; extension of freedoms (especially religious); proliferation of media outlets, political parties, and NGOs (including transnational); direct (i.e., not via Moscow) access to international aid, media, scientific and communication technologies and perspectives; and quality consumer goods (United Nations, 2003, p. 111). Globalization also ended Soviet isolationism and democratized trans-national mobility of people, hitherto possible only for the Soviet elite. The presentation of globalization, however, has been one-sided and propagandistic. It has over-demonized the socialist project and over-romanticized the West and Islam. Everything Soviet and socialist has been construed as unworkable and unacceptable to human nature. Even achievements such as universal literacy and health care, scientific progress, gender equity, and redistributive justice, which were initially viewed as a strong foundation for these countries' quick transformation to advanced democracies, are now considered as obstacles to reaching this hope. As a result, Central Asian educators have been pushed to abandon everything Soviet and Russian rather than synthesize them with the Western and Islamic.

Neoliberal globalization's penetration has also been mediated, indirect, and hegemonic. To make globalization's march into Central Asia easier and irreversible, western development agencies disguised their predominant neoliberal and capitalist faces. Years since Soviet collapse,

the word *neoliberalism* continues to be largely absent in the local discourses, while *capitalism* was either avoided or presented as having transformed from predatory, parasitic, discriminatory, and imperialistic into a social-democratic, welfarist, multiparty democracy; a liberal, meritocratic system, supportive of quality and abundance, mobility and opportunity, human rights and freedoms. These were qualities allegedly *completely* absent or repressed during the Soviet era and *indiscriminately* available to all citizens of the Western capitalist societies. Avoiding globalization meant self-marginalization, being left behind and not catching-up with progress. Its neoliberal tenets, such as free markets, financial deregulation, privatization, human capital formation, and individualist entrepreneurship have been praised as promoting efficiency, accountability, and equity for all. Neoliberalism has been marketed as the salvation from economic stagnation, institutional bureaucracy, social and political corruption, waste, dogmatism, and abuse. Its darker sides, such as lip service to equity, financial recessions, social polarizations, ecological disasters, excessive consumerism, privatization and competition, homogenization, and neocolonialism have been downplayed (Anderson, Cavanaugh, & Lee, 2000; Klees, 2008; United Nations, 2003, p.112).

Soviets' self-isolation and disregard of Western academic and development analyses hindered Central Asia's policy-makers and practitioners from acquaintance with the existing critiques of neoliberalism, and the troubling effects it had produced elsewhere. Being socialized into Soviet essentialist approaches, the Soviet citizens and elite were desensitized to note that terms like democracy, freedom, individualism, choice, rights, private, standards and so on are contested and vary in meaning, purpose, and effect under neoliberalism from those under social-democratic capitalism. There was little awareness that civil society, NGOs, and aid could be tools for furthering neoliberalism and creating dependency on the West (De-Cordier, 2008; Klees, 2009). Central Asian countries' research and knowledge production opportunities and capacities are disempowered to scrutinize and expose globalization's open and hidden agendas (Niyozov & Bahry, 2006). Far from being critical analysts, Central Asian scholars and research centres operate as consumers, implementers, and supporters of the outside, predominantly neoliberal policies. Tajikistan's educational and intellectual sectors, for example, lack exposure to the advanced theories and methodologies to deal with the issues facing the country or are simply too busy to make their life ends meet (Niyozov & Bulbulov, 2012, forthcoming.¹ State-oriented education research is geared toward discovering pre-Soviet educational ideas to boost the nation state's internal and international legitimacy (e.g., Karimova, 2010). International agencies overwhelmingly use survey and statistics to create niches for their interventions and empowerment, through reproducing aid, serving capitals' flow, and fostering consumerism and cosmopolitanism. The purpose is to remake Central Asians to fit external imaginings rather than to pursue their aspirations.

The end-of-soviet political elite were co-opted by the prospect that if they led the collapse of the USSR, and accepted and accelerated the free-market reforms, they would stay in power. Although they had lost the Cold War, they could become post-Cold War winners and join the globalizing elite stratum. Subsequently, the majority of Soviet communist elites joined in praising the West, market economy, multiparty democracy, religious freedoms, human rights, consumer choice, privatization, and pluralism. Many Central Asian policy-makers blatantly cursed the very system they had pushed down their citizens' throats; they became national and

1. In an acknowledgement of, and response to this key development challenge, a new, fully computerized library with access to the Internet, electronic journals, and a global library database was inaugurated in Dushanbe in 2012. In the last ten years, Internet access to scholarly research has been made available at the key research institutions such as Academies of Sciences, but the situation is still in serious need of improvement.

religious leaders doing pilgrimage, writing books, and telling people when and how to conduct themselves in public and private. Their cooptation simultaneously sanctified neoliberalism and conservative religiosity, and legitimized their own rule (Keshavjee, 1998; Luong, 2004, pp. 280-283).

In spite of the above, Central Asian societies' entrance into globalization has been multilayered and complex. The flow of Western aid into Central Asia started right from 1992, after the first Western assessment delegations from the United Nations (UN), World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United States Agency for International development (USAID), Organization for Security and Construction of Europe (OSCE), Soros, and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) arrived into its various corners. The WB, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the ADB pushed for structural adjustments already initiated in East Europe, Russia, and the Baltic states. Concealed political motivation behind humanitarian aid; the unprecedented rate at which financial aid and foreign expertise were sent to the region; standardized reforms across nations and regions; idiosyncratic logics of funding agencies and NGOs about what they chose to fund; and a misfit between funding criteria and national and regional needs characterized the frenetic activity behind the international organizations' work (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008, pp. 2-3). Among many interests of the Western aid in Central Asia, three have been strategic: (a) detach it from the Soviet past and Russian present with no thought of return (Takala & Piattoeva, 2012); (b) save it from the radical anti-Western Islamic discourses of South Asia and Iran (Rashid, 1995); and (c) make it fully integrated and dependent on the global market economy (De Young et al., 2006). These ambitions stumbled as neoliberalism's financial failure in Russia became a wake-up call for Central Asians (Kotz, 1999).

9/11 triggered a second wave of international interest in the region. Central Asian states quickly re-positioned themselves as the frontline of the security narrative and global war on terror. More international aid has flowed since: Tajikistan's National Education Strategy lists 20 international donors/agencies, including the WB, IMF, ADB, Islamic Bank, United Nations' Development Program (UNDP), USAID, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Saudi Fund, the AKF, and the Soros Foundation (SF), working with the Tajik government:

From 2000 to 2010 the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan implemented a number of investment projects in the area of education, which were aimed at renewal of the education system, achieving equal access to education, solving gender problems, improving the quality of education and elimination of poverty by increasing the education level of the population. During that period, 14 credit-grant agreements have been signed for the total amount of 159.7 million USD, including agreements on a grant basis and unrequited support for 90.6 million in the form of credit -58, 1 million USD, as well as the contribution of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in the amount of 11 million USD (NSED, 2011, p. 10).

Even though their debts have reached billions of dollars (World Bank, 2012), the Central Asian governments continue considering the acquisition of foreign loans as a matter of prestige and strategic significance (e.g., NSED, 2011).

Neoliberal globalization's penetration has also been mediated, indirect, and hegemonic. Turkey, China, Russia, Iran, India transnational organizations, such as the UN, Save the Children, the SF, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and the Gullen Islamist movement, have been serving as both conduits of globalization and responses to neoliberalism. SF, for example, has emphasized capitalism with human face, highlighting a constructivist-dialogical approach and emphasising local capacity development. The AKDN and Gullen have

tried to reshape neoliberalism through their particular Islamic ethical frameworks of dialog and synthesis of Islamic, western, and socialist discourses. The approaches toward Central Asia have been constructivist (i.e., Iran vis-à-vis Tajikistan), neorealist (China and India), or neoliberal-economic (Turkey vis-à-vis Central Asia's Turkic states in the 2000s, after its pan-Turkish discourse's failure in 1990s) (Abdulkhamidova, 2009).

In sum, globalization brought multiple globalizers with criss-crossing interests: hard-core neoliberals, disguised anti-neoliberals, negotiators, and genuine anti-neoliberals from everywhere. Many international agencies and donors took Central Asian relevant educators and policy-makers on exposure/study trips to the Baltic states, South Asia, New Zealand, the United States, and Western Europe to buy these local leaders into their could-be successes through participation in global capitalism. Plus, many top-level advisors to education, finance, and economic ministries in Central Asia came from Eastern European or developing countries. These have experienced and facilitated "successful" transitions to capitalism in similar situations. In reality, each of these actors suggested their personal-institutional understanding and negotiation of the western ideas (Silova, 2006).

Central Asians were latecomers among other post-socialist latecomers to globalization.² This had contradictory effects: It led to the *lagging-behind, catching-up* fever among the elite, which also agonized their countrymen. But this late-coming also marked the multilateral and bilateral agencies' emphasis on working more with the peripheral governments: Some of the Central Asian governments (e.g., Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) were in need of strengthening rather than weakening. There was increasing realization that undermined and failed states could endanger the global market's safe operation. Contrarily, weak governments, empowered only in certain areas, could become effective servants of global corporate interests, transnational agencies, and superpowers. Lastly and importantly, the late-coming status also implied that Central Asian policy-makers were somehow aware of how others, especially Russia, had dealt with globalization's offers and international agencies. This diversity resulted in mixed responses on the ground. The governments checked every offer in terms of its threat to the ruling group's positions: Uzbekistan refused to become a submissive stooge of the world's major donors in 2000s. Kazakhstan took advantage of its energy resources to refuse financial aid, join the Bologna club, the World Trade Organization, dissociate itself from the rest of Central Asia, and even become a donor country. Rich Turkmenistan continues its so-called neutrality path to globalization midwifed by Turkey. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have not been able to negotiate from a powerful place. They are now more like semi-protectorates or facilitative states of the globalizing markets, increasingly vulnerable to global geopolitics (Abdulkhamidova, 2009; Petric, 2011).

At any rate, for two decades post-Soviet, Central Asian policy-makers have joined the global education space, used Western education terminology (e.g., child-centered, curriculum, credit system, per capita funding); have literally translated many terms into their languages; and, in some cases, have re-interpreted globalization ideas as their own but well-forgotten practices, making the strange neoliberalism familiar and almost indigenous (e.g., active learning pedagogy; community's contribution to school; students' councils; ability tracks, as having emerged during the Soviet era (see Bulbulov & Niyozov, 2012, in press). Other practices (e.g., fee-based programs, private schools, outcome-based education, standardized testing), while contentious

²Silova & Steiner-Khamsi (2008) name Central Asian states as latecomers to globalization in comparison to other former socialist countries of East and Central Europe. We suggest that even among the latecomers had later-comers such as Tajikistan, which was stuck in civil war until 1998, and Turkmenistan, which simply enclosed itself until late 1990s.

elsewhere, are presented as equitable and highly desirable, as responding to above-average and hard working students' needs, who allegedly have wasted their talents in the mediocre and uniform Soviet schools. Central Asian policy-makers have accepted the language of crisis and abandoned their language of pride. This shift has allowed them to benefit from Western aid, market economy, privatization, discourses of democracy, and human rights. They have aligned their needs with the priorities of the WB, IMF, ADB, and other agencies, sweeping some of their peoples' *actual needs* under the rug. They consider the western university academics' critique of foreign aid as destructive and unrealistic.³

In sum, Central Asia's education systems' entrance into neoliberal globalization was geared towards their countries becoming providers of energy, labour, and consumption for the global corporate market and industrially-developed countries. Yet, by various contextual defaults, some proactive agency, structural contradictions of the international aid (Samoff, 2009), the recent crises/failures of neoliberalism, and the latecomer syndrome, Central Asians have been able, to some extent, to reshape the globalizing agendas, policies, and practices to their personal and communal benefits (De Young et al., 2006; Spechler, 2004). They believe the market will take care of the shocking inequalities in living standards through "trickle down", "hard work", and "good luck" approaches. Their indigenous and endogenous discourses (pan-Islamist, pan-nationalist, and Soviet/Socialist) have only been able to align themselves with the existing neoliberalism. Currently, these discourses are trying to carve safe spaces for themselves under its generous wings, while waiting to see when it will fail so that they jump in to fill the void. At times, playing a double game, they have used both their detached Western donors and grounded anti-Western groups to promote their own global ambitions. As conscious or unconscious neoliberal benefactors, they have joined the globally-situated elite, crossing borders, cultures, and races, and transforming education into human capital formation industry (De Young et al., 2005).

Post-Soviet education reform package in Central Asia

Both globalizers and national policy-makers in Central Asia see education as central to the double task of building new nation states and integrating them into global market economy. To serve these and other purposes, such as pragmatics of saving the crumbling education infrastructure, providing textbooks, and retaining the fleeing teachers, Western educational ideas, policies, and practices were exported to Central Asia in what Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2008) have described as the "post-Socialist education reform package." This package has included three sets of ideas, (1) common to low-income countries (e.g., reduction of public expenditure on education; increase of private spending; decentralization of finance and governance; rationalization of school staff, and reorganization of schools); (2) common to post-socialist countries (e.g., extending schools from 10 and 11 to 12 years; new curriculum standards; standardized assessment systems for school leavers and university entrants; market-driven textbook provision; educational choice; student-centred and active learning pedagogies; community schools; and (3) specific to Central Asia (e.g., girls' education; conflict resolution; Turkish Gullen schools).

This package is couched in the rhetoric of ensuring that Central Asian education systems are up to date with the "best education practices." Their contestation at their birthplaces and failure elsewhere has been concealed, while their conceptual, pedagogical significances and

³ This thought was expressed by a senior education official from Tajikistan during our conversation at the 2012 *Comparative and International Education* conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico- May, 2012.

money bringing potentials are emphasized. Importantly, the package continues to expand, as the development agencies, donors, and their local interlocutors move from one unfinished or semi-successful project (e.g., critical thinking, interactive pedagogy) to another money-making fad in the global knowledge economy (e.g., early childhood, inclusive education). At times, local needs get incorporated due to (a) local-global grassroots alliances' insistence; (b) purposeful and selective "mis-allocation" of money to projects important for the elite; and (c) power of the intermediary or implementing agency to re-interpret it (e.g., Open Society Institute, AKDN, as we shall see later in this article). Under these pressures, new items such as nation building, pre-service teacher education, multi-grade teaching, minority/inclusive education, boarding schools for nomadic regions have been added. The OSI, AKF, and USAID programs such as the Quality Learning Project have advocated for some of these additions (Evans, 2011; Niyozov, 2008).

In all cases, the package arrived with a lot of funding, and the cash-strapped and conceptually-unprepared local actors could not resist its content, style, and effect. At times, these local policy-makers' reasoning has echoed *the world culture* theorists' (neo-institutionalists') assertions (e.g., Meyer & Ramirez, 2000), that Western ideas are borrowed proactively because they are more effective, efficient, and equitable than local ideas and are rationally, evidentially, and logically irresistible. Critical comparative educators have exposed this school's Eurocentrist and positivist assumptions; as well as its neoliberalist globalizing agenda (see Carney, Rappleye, & Silova, 2012 for a critique). To that end, *world system* theorists (e.g., Samoff, 2009; Spring, 2006), have argued that travelling policies and their borrowing and lending aim at normalizing the global and local dependencies and inequalities, and reconsolidating the periphery as life-long supplier and consumer of the globalizing market. Researchers on borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, Silova, & Johnson, 2006; Silova, 2006), and sociological ethnographers (De Young et al, 2006) have, through extensive process-based field studies, illustrated that lending and borrowing are value-and interest-laden activities. Using multi-disciplinary framework (e.g., cultural anthropology, political economy, post-colonialism) they found that at times, the borrowers and lenders care little about the implementation of their policies, their negative effects, and their own complicity. Yet the borrowers (usually the elite) are not mindless and submissive in-takers: they process travelling policies in terms of their personal and institutional interests. These policy makers usually borrow an idea to resolve a domestic policy conflict/crisis. They are "advised" to borrow not because the reforms from elsewhere are better, but because the very act of borrowing has a salutary political effect at home. International agencies often lend practices despite knowing that they have not worked well elsewhere. Yet in their reports these agencies often "show" that these practices worked in Central Asia, because of these agencies' "right approach" to their implementation. In reality, the actual reforms (i.e., whether students develop critical thinking or cooperative learning attitudes, or are becoming multiculturalists) matter little as long as the language of reform is used, success stories created, and money flows for the experts and their local interlocutors. Local policy makers and scholars buy in to domesticate and indigenize, modify, hybridize, correct, adapt, and reject these policies. Reforms are always borrowed selectively and implemented contextually. Borrowing educational reforms from outside is also a pre-condition for admittance to the international community and "civilized world". Lastly, even though policy makers and their international advisers promote certain policies, they have to go through teachers because teachers inevitably reprocess these practices. Teachers, given their poor life and work conditions, usually pay lip service to their implementation. They see these outside in and top down de-contextualized practices causing

intensification of their busy lives, as well as denigrating their wisdom and knowledge (Silova & 6, 2008, pp. 187–193; De Young et al., 2006; Niyozov, 2003).

Examples from Central Asia: An Overview

Globalization's exploitation has had different meanings, taken different forms, and ensued different outcomes in Central Asia. The following overview of some projects in Central Asia, followed by two elaborate examples from Tajikistan, shows the benefits of this multi-framework analysis and enriches these studies' contributions.

De Young et al. (2006) have provided first-hand examples of these gaps and failures of globally-induced reforms in Central Asia. Global policies are not only adopted and adapted (hybridized and glocalized) but more often ignored, resisted and openly rejected, suggests De Young's team. Detailing USAID-led PEAKS (Participation for Education and Knowledge Strengthening) and the WB's Rural Education Project (REP) in Kyrgyzstan, the authors point out misconceptions and wrong assumptions by the international agencies and experts that engendered a weak start for the two projects trajectories. International experts assumed that Soviet education had neither active learning pedagogies nor critical and creative skills. When locals objected, they were told that Soviet active learning pedagogies (if ever existed) were perverted and needed to be discarded. Additional differences about notions of good school, educated student/citizen, quality, and community involvement polarized along national vs. international, humanist vs. market/economic dichotomies. Western agencies and consultants had the misguided belief that Kyrgyz leaders would be glad to be rid of the yoke of Soviet oppression. They ignored the fact that educators (e. g., every educator with whom De Young and his team spoke) were "proud of their shared Soviet educational heritage, and for good reason" (De Young et al., 2006, p. 216), and that Central Asians had resisted the USSR's collapse. Ultimately, the agendas of the development organizations and lending banks took over and the national Ministry of Education and its branches unconvincingly consented to become "implementing agencies" (World Bank Kyrgyzstan, 2004, p. 1, as cited in De Young et al., 2006, p. 215), because there were "huge financial incentives for the cash-strapped indigenous bureaucracy..."(De Young et al., 2006, p. 216). At the school level however, many of these policies and programs were effectively ignored (p. 217). De Young et al.'s (2006) conclusions expose the political-economic implications of Western aid in Kyrgyzstan, resonant with those in the rest of Central Asia:

In the final analysis, the PEAKS' and the World Bank's Rural Education projects appear both as entry points and institutional mechanisms "to implement a far more sweeping, yet never-fully-articulated set of values, practices, and techniques that extend beyond the realm of education. Attempting to "remake" the pupil and the teacher in Kyrgyzstan, without addressing the underlying the institutional issues that foster many of the "problems" identified with Kyrgyz schooling may "improve" Kyrgyz schooling, but we are unsure that such "improvements" will be for the benefits of the Kyrgyz themselves (p. 225).

Speaking of *hybridization*, one recalls Open Society Institute's (OSI) projects in Central Asia (such as PEAKS, Step by Step (SbS), and Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking). Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2008), De Young et al. (2006) Niyozov & Dastambuev (2010), and Price-Rom & Sainazarov (2009) have noted that the campaigns aimed at changing teachers' mentality and practices from didactic and teacher-centred to active and child-centred have had very modest effects. At most, the targeted teacher-centred practices have slightly softened. Some

teachers may now allow students ask a few questions. But, most of these questions are of a lower-order recall type. In fact, once the projects close and money dries, teachers revert to their old didactic approaches. The use of students' mother tongues, the eliciting of students' opinions and experiences, and discussions around local histories and social issues have increasingly become as limited as they were before the pilots. As a part of the ethnic nation-building strategy, minority students and teachers are now discouraged to speak their minority mother tongues, highlight their particular identity, and allow for divergent viewpoints on social issues, national histories, and literature. Girls, boys, and teachers are told what to wear, how to look, and what to think. Tests are matched with the textbooks, where fixed answers and single solutions are solidified. The key reasons for this are a dishonest presentation of travelling policies, their unfaithful implementation, lack of integration of teachers' work and life conditions, and the hierarchical, centralist, donor-dependent, authoritarian political/cultural contexts in Central Asia. A Central Asian teacher warned against these as early as in 2001:

This is Pamir (Tajikistan) and a blind imitation of Amonashvili and Shatalov⁴ won't work. We need to look at what we have. You improve our living conditions and we will work and create new ideas by ourselves. Look at the availability and quality of the material and technical basis: the classes, teaching aids, technical facilities, heating, whatever a teacher needs for teaching well. You ask us about our lives and do something for us before asking to change. You should ask about my life before my classroom (Niyozov, 2001, p. 237).

Replacing existing practices completely (Spreen, 2004) has been another outcome of the globalization's discourse. The Communist-Leninist images and ideas have officially been replaced by the nationalist and Islamic. Indeed many communist leaders (such as Shirinsho Shotemur, Nusratullo Makhsom, and Bobojon Ghafurov in Tajikistan) have re-emerged as nationalist leaders, founders of their current nation states. Histories of the Communist Party and the USSR, basics of Marxism-Leninism, and scientific atheism at the university level have been replaced by national histories and history of religions. Russian language and literature were drastically reduced and replaced by English or pan-nationalist and pan-religious languages (Arabic, Persian, and Turkic) (Asanova, 2007; Niyozov, 2001) until Russian's recent revival in local education.⁵ These replacements challenge Western and perestroika's rhetoric of de-ideologization and de-politicization (Ekloff & Dneprov, 1993). Instead, most of the Central Asian education systems have been re-ideologized and re-politicized. These re-ideologizations have tactically aligned the parochial and conservative (e.g., ethno-religious nationalism and trans-national Islamism) with the neo-liberally interpreted ideas of human rights, gender equity, and freedoms, democracy, and choice.

Complementing a gap with something new has been a preferred rhetoric by the international and local NGOs. This approach is often seen as positive, given the budget shrinkage, increased demands, and shortage of human, intellectual, and material resources at the local states' levels. Adding civic education (i.e., including the topics gender equity, minority education, tolerance and peace -making) into *Law and State* in Grades 8 and 9 is an example of complementing. At times this approach has also backfired. For example, Steiner-Khamsi &

4 Shatalov and Amonashvili were amongst the *Pedagogy of Cooperation's* leading innovators during Perestroika.

5. Gradually, however, the status of Russian language has been restored in the Central Asia. It was re-elevated as a second official/ national language, language of inter-ethnic communication, which led to an increase in the hours of instruction in it in the schools. The influence of Russian is growing due not only to bilateral and multilateral treaties such as CIS, but also because of the need to enhance the language skills of the millions of Central Asian migrants, as well as the fact that Russia is an emerging aid donor, in the countries of not only of the former Soviet Union, but also of the former anti-imperialist developing countries of Africa and Asia (Takala & Piattoeva, 2012).

Stolpe (2009) describe that in Mongolia, adding new accountability requirements (as an element of the globally-infamous *Outcomes Based Education*) to the existing scheme of teacher accountability in the face of declining support and miserable salaries resulted in teachers' resistance, burnout, and flight from the profession.

Correcting has been another borrowing and lending practice. USAID's Quality Learning Project, the Soros Foundation's OSI, and the AKF, for example, jointly or alone, have invested heavily in in-service teacher training in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, providing workshops and seminars for teachers on active learning methods, producing cheap and sustainable learning resources, and re-writing textbooks for various subjects. In all these, the teachers were provided with meals, transport, lodging, and modest financial rewards. These measures boosted teachers' morale and kept some in the profession (Niyozov, 2008). This was a corrective to the larger donors' assumption that investing in pre-and in-service training of teachers was a waste for three reasons: (1) Soviet-trained teachers were considered to be a lost generation, too deeply brainwashed by Soviet ideology to change; (2) post-Soviet teachers were not worth training because of the continuing outdated Soviet pre-service education, and (3) more than 50% of the teacher education graduates never took up the profession (NSED, 2011; Silova, 2009). In the long run, however, these commendable correctives have been wasteful, given the unstoppable teachers' flight from the profession and region: Injecting "professional skills", while disregarding teachers' life and working conditions has been a failing start of the global reforms in Central Asia (Niyozov, 2001).

In sum, the above examples illustrate various transformations (e.g., hybridization, replacement, reinforcement, correction) that have happened during the lending and borrowing of global ideas (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). They also point to structural issues in education aid, such as dependency, lack of dialogue, unequal power relations, and globalisers' arrogance, and insensitivity (Samoff, 2009). Together with the local policy-makers' doubletalk, abuse of aid for their personal interests, and reinforcement of conservative and discriminatory practices, the hopes aspired from the Soviet collapse are turning into despair for the majority in Central Asia (De Young et al., 2006; Heyneman, 2004; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008).

Negotiating globalization in Tajikistan: Cases of multiple transformations

While the above cases have been portrayed as turning on a single transformation, the following two cases from Tajikistan involve multiple transformations, combining despair with hope.

Case 1: Education Research Support Unit (ERSU) "PULSE" in Dushanbe

The establishment of an *Education Research Support Unit* (ERSU later named into "PULSE") in Tajikistan is a case of simultaneous *complementing, correcting, reinforcing, and reshaping* of neoliberal restructuring. The ERSU "PULSE" (PULSE, hereafter) is a private-public and global-local venture between Tajikistan's Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Education Ministry.⁶ It aimed to shift Tajik educators from being implementers of global policies and data collectors for international agencies to becoming education sector reviewers, policy designers, and analysts (Abdushukurova, 2008). To do so, PULSE is to (a) support reform by identifying specific needs of education development in Tajikistan; (b) serve as a watchdog to ensure that outside initiatives contribute to a meaningfully and positively coherent, primarily Tajik education framework, rather than serve the donor agendas; and (c) become a reform catalyst, facilitating informed discussions on important education issues to shape public opinion and mobilize stakeholders to

⁶ For more on PULSE see <http://www.tajik-gateway.org/index.phtml?lang=en&id=2142>

support the educational development in Tajikistan (Abdushukurova, 2008, p. 192). OSI regarded PULSE as a conduit for its vision of globalization and education reform, different from that of the World Bank's and the IMF's. Through PULSE, OSI has tried to reform predatory neoliberalism into a one with human face (Soros, 2002) and correct the effects of Western aid in Central Asia. The mechanism was to develop local research and policy-making capacity, -a clearly noble intention, critical to any sustainable anti-colonial development. OSI (2002) noticed that:

Similar to other Central Asia countries, the majority of international donors in Tajikistan failed to involve local education stakeholders in education policy development, limiting the role of the local NGOs to implementation of externally designed education projects. Without exception, international donors have justified their dominant role in Tajikistan education development by explaining that local policy makers struggle with severe lack of policy-making skills (such as analytical and strategy planning capacities), while the NGO sector has neither "a real voice" nor "the organizational capacity" to engage actively in policy formulations (p. 11, cited in Abdushukurova, 2008, p. 194).

The need to revive local knowledge production was especially critical when the local Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, dating from Soviet times, went into a deep decline. Since 2001, PULSE has been managed by local educators who were hired through criteria-based procedures, trained in quantitative and qualitative research methods, financial analysis, program design, education policy, as well as content-specific areas (e. g., higher-education reform, school curriculum, and textbooks). They were exposed to study tours and provided with a technologically equipped space (Interview with Qodirov, Director of PULSE, August 8, 2012). The unit members have been conducting surveys and producing reports and policy analyses, offering workshops, and organizing conferences and seminars to education and other social service providers on early childhood education, gender issues, human rights, use of technology, and higher and minority education. Among its reports are *Analysis of the State of the Secondary Schools in Tajikistan* (2001-2002); *Study of English Language Teaching in Schools of Tajikistan* (2004), *Non-Formal Education in Tajikistan* (2009). Its manuals include *Statistical Analysis of Education System* (2003), *I am a Citizen* (2004).⁷ In 2005, the centre established a *debate club* for university students; in 2006 a forum titled *Student Action Committee*. PULSE's courses and seminars have included the 2010 course on *Farsi and Uzbek for International Students*, and the 2011's summer course, *Using Electronic Tools in Teaching and Learning at Tajik Universities*. PULSE plans to develop into a professional scientific and analytical centre, create an education database, organize seminars in policy and management, and plan for the future of the system.

PULSE has also been providing a forum for the exchange of national and international experiences through its quarterly journal *Maktab wa Jome'a* (*School and Society*), established in 2008. From 2008 to 2010, 23 issues of the journal were published. A quick journey into the 22nd issue of *Maktab wa Jome'a* takes us through themes (all written by Tajikistani scholars in Tajik and Russian), of *international experiences on education financing* (pp. 7-11); *criteria and models for disseminating progressive pedagogical experiences* (pp. 11-14); *piloting of new generation textbooks* (pp. 18-23); *creative use of proverbs and idioms in teaching Russian* (pp. 37-42); and *corruption in Tajikistan's higher education* (pp. 51-54). Reading through these important themes, we found very limited critical engagement; they are overwhelmingly descriptive/prescriptive, uncritically proposing these innovations as local education solutions.

⁷ All PULSE analytical reports, manuals and project documents are available at the PULSE office and OSI Dushanbe. Due to space limits, we have avoided listing them in this article's reference section.

Despite the above achievements, PULSE has remained a work in progress as far as its original mission and ambition is concerned. Its institutionalization plan of merging PULSE with the Ministry of Education also failed. Abdushukurova (2008) and the PULSE's current director explain this failure due to the Ministry's and some of the donor's inability to intake PULSE's honest critique of the situation and system, and the change of the Ministry's leadership at the time. The Ministry created its own *Department of Policy Analysis* and invited the then PULSE's director to head the department. Few other PULSE's staff members left and its influence declined. PULSE's strong connection with OSI further weakened its chance of getting funding from elsewhere. PULSE's continued dependence on funding from international agencies (primarily OSI, but also others more recently UNICEF and USAID), has influenced its mandate. PULSE misguidedly sees its support by, and requests from the Western agencies, as manifestations of its popularity and independence from the Ministry of Education. While at times there is a good match between the donors' and local needs, more often PULSE reports and articles make it easy for Western solutions and "best practices" into Tajikistan's problems, often constructed along the donors' agendas. These projects and practices have included child-centred pedagogy, per capita funding, privatization, establishing credit system, independent national testing centers, grade repetition, drop-out, informal education, inclusive, and minority education, i.e., items of the post-socialist education package. This also affected the unit's methodological approach, which has been predominantly statistical and opinion surveys. A former PULSE employee mentioned that from his report for PULSE a few years ago, "qualitative data was removed. They were seen as irrelevant to the arguments, and as making conclusions unconvincing" (Conversation with Qudratov, PULSE's former senior employee, May 24, 2012).

All these in turn, led to the very outcomes that OSI has warned against: the risk of PULSE increasingly becoming a centre for studies and other projects commissioned by the donors and international agencies to prove their assumptions and justify their interventions in Central Asia. Even though OSI and PULSE are aware of this risk, the lack of local funding courses, PULSE's NGO status, and the increasing number of lucrative requests take the unit's time and energy away from its strategic repositioning. Notably, PULSE's current director does not regard the donor's and international agencies' requests (*zakazho*) as serving foreign agendas: "In all cases, these studies are aimed to serve Tajik education system and its people. The westerners do not give orders to us. I believe we are a bridge between the global and local ideas. We always compare" (Interview with Qodirov, PULSE's Director, August 8, 2012). He, however, acknowledged that international donors, more than the local ministries, are the frequent "requesters" (*zakazchikho*) and users of PULSE's reports, manuals, and staff expertise: "In 2008, PULSE did a mapping of schools in Khatlon Province, listing the needs and situation of these schools in detail. More than local departments, the World Bank used this report to strategize how many and what kind of schools to build and what infrastructural improvements to carry". (Interview with Qodirov, PULSE's Director, August 8, 2012). Other requesters and users are GTZ (Germany Technical Assistance), Arizona State University, and USAID.

Notably, from 2010, PULSE has managed to recover its image and re-establish itself as a more or less independent, non-commercial center devoted to Tajikistan's democratic and sustainable development. Education Ministry as well as other international organizations have continued consulting PULSE for policy developments. Potentially, PULSE can also fill the official education research gaps in methodology by (a) introducing qualitative research; and (b) re-orienting the heritage, ethno-pedagogic focussed studies into engaging in real contemporary educational and social issues. PULSE faces challenges, such as its members' departure for better

jobs. Its identity is uncertain between being an OSI's de-facto spin-off and de-jure indigenous unit; PULSE is also in a need for the diversification of its local funding sources to grow and be impactful at both national and regional levels. Abdushukurova (2008) summarizes PULSE's key challenge aptly:

In the context of Tajikistan's hierarchical mentality and centralized culture, ERSU [PULSE] remains the only organization that provides an institutional structure for regular interaction among government officials, schools, international agencies and NGOs in education reform (p. 194).

Case 2: Institute of Professional Development (IPD) in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Oblast (GBAO)

The Institute of Professional Development in Khorog (IPD henceforth) was created in 1957. Until 1980s, it was the Institute of Improving Teachers' Qualifications, and provided in-service refreshment courses to educators throughout the province. In the Soviet era, every new teacher underwent a compulsory 18- or 24-day course every year for three years, while every experienced teacher (i.e., teacher with more than 3 years of experience) once every 5 years. The best provincial, republican, and all-Soviet-level teacher trainers, subject specialists, textbook writers, and innovators would conduct those in-service workshops. The centre also produced booklets describing the best local teaching practices, and locally made aids and guides. Its well-paid staff enjoyed the Soviet era privileges assigned to educators (Bulbulov & Niyozov, 2012). The Institute was reviewed by both local and the all-union-level commissions (in 1983 and 1989) out of Dushanbe and Moscow. During both reviews, it received outstanding appraisals. Many staff members were awarded the title of *Outstanding Education Worker of Tajikistan and USSR*. In the late 1980s, the Institute was a place through which Soviet progressive ideas (e.g., pedagogy of cooperation) were disseminated (Khushnazarov, 2011).

The collapse of the USSR and Tajikistan's inability to cope with its tremendous challenges led the institute into dysfunction. In 1998, the recovering Ministry of Education and its provincial department renamed the institute a method centre, further downgrading the scale of its activities. By then, the centre's best specialists had left; its technical resources depleted; and its budget abysmal. Monthly salaries of the teacher trainers in 1996–1997 ranged from 3–5 USD (Bulbulov, 2011).

1998 became a watershed year: the IPD was renamed the Teachers' Professional Development Centre (TPDC), reflecting the new needs for in-service teacher training. The *History of Tajik People, English, Information Technology, Ethics, and Tajik Language* were re-introduced as part of the national cohesion and market economy agendas and supported by the WB. Simultaneously, the IPD also attracted the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), which had been working in Badakhshan province for 3 years. The AKF is a member of the Aga Khan transnational private development network headquartered in Paris and Geneva. It operates within the realities of Western neoliberal market economy. It is headquartered in the West and manned with Western graduates; it receives funding from the WB, USAID, CIDA, and ADB. However, the AKF has a distinct mission in two senses: (1) it represents a non-for-profit private NGO, committed to working with public institutions; (2) like the Soros Foundation and the Gullen Network, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) claims to be a corrective to neoliberalism and a provider of an alternative globalization (Waljee, 2010). It avoids using terms such as "neoliberalism" and "capitalism." Instead, AKDN locates its work in the Aga Khan's interpretation of Islamic ethics. This ethical framework suggests an active reshaping of globalization and other global achievements to serve the purposes of Muslim and surrounding

impoverished communities (Aga Khan IV, Badakhshan, At Khorog State University, May 1995, as cited in Keshavjee, 1998, p. 61; see also AKDN, 2009, 2010).

The AKF arrived in Tajikistan in 1993 and launched its relief and development work in the country's Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Province. By 1998, the AKF's education section had done a baseline survey of schooling in the province (Kuder, 1996); some in-service training, especially for English teachers; and established a good rapport with the education department. Like the OSI, AKF also organized study tours into the Baltic, South Asia and East Africa, and policy workshops for educators. In fact, between 1993 and 1998, the AKF carried out the regional education department's arduous task of ensuring that the system survives the post-Soviet shocks (Keshavjee, 1998). By then hundreds of the province's qualified teachers had left the profession for other jobs. The remaining teachers were old, demoralized, underpaid, overused, and unappreciated. In 1999, the AKF and the provincial education department, with the endorsement of the National Ministry of Education, began a radical reconfiguration of the IPD. The Institute was restructured from single-subject cabinets (e.g., Chemistry cabinet) into unit clusters such as primary education, early childhood education, secondary education, social sciences, natural sciences, school management, finance and administration.

The AKF has discovered the IPD as a conduit for its version of the post-socialist neoliberal package and globalization, and for influencing the state education system. As a public forum, the IPD has provided (a) unfettered access to government schools where the AKDN's international expertise in both public and private schools could be disseminated; (b) grassroots' evidence to inform national policies and strategies; (c) increased access to funds from, and cooperation with international donors; and (d) a venue for cross-border cooperation (e. g., with Afghanistan, AKF-IPD, 2011; Waljee, 2010). The AKF brought its South Asian and East African experience and many Western experts to the IPD to help in almost all areas mentioned in the original and evolving education reform package. A pragmatic and non-ideological engagement with "best practices", including connecting them with Soviet era and Islamic practices, as well as structural changes to promote the IPD's transparency and efficiency were adopted to allay any official suspicions.

By 2008, the IPD had become a stable institution with the capacity to administer a full array of education activities. Within 10 years, it developed capacities in teacher training, strategic planning, fundraising, community mobilizing, and managing finances and human resources. It transformed in-service teacher training into a more intensive and structured lifelong process: every teacher could now undergo the 18 or 26 days in-service each two years. Meanwhile mentoring, action research, learning centers and method units promoted teachers' continuous learning. Since 2002, the IPD has been producing a monthly 32-page journal, *Rahnamoi Omuzgor (A Teacher's Guide)*, dedicated to sharing the best of local and global educational practices, and distributing them across local education organizations. The IPD's educators have also developed Tajik-language textbooks for math and chemistry for the advanced secondary grades, and a number of primary-level publications.⁸ Like PULSE, IPD's engagement through the journal is largely descriptive/prescriptive rather than critical.

Noticing the IPD's successes, in 2009, the Tajikistan Education Ministry assigned it to lead reform beyond the Badakhshan region. Subsequently, the IPD developed the technical and institutional capacities of IPDs in Rasht, Kulob, and Dushanbe and contributed to the

8. Even though the education laws in Tajikistan and Afghanistan have provisions for developing textbooks and materials in the minority and indigenous languages, little actual progress has been made in these fields due to a lack of financial and human resources and larger economic concerns. Open Society Institute and the Aga Khan Foundation have been among those to support efforts in this regard in Central Asia.

strengthening of regional and district education departments. In 2011, IPD assisted in establishing an independent Association of Creative Teachers, *Padida*. The association has 166 members and is led by IPD's former educator. In 2010, the AKF and IPD carried out a multidimensional survey to measure the impact of the IPD's activities on teachers' and students' achievement. The results (Bulbulov, 2011, pp. 73–83) indicate that there has been some improvement in all surveyed items (for example, use of active learning/teaching methods, use of additional teaching materials, and allowing discussions in the classroom, parental involvement among others) in all the schools under IPD's intervention.

Since 2010, the IPD has gone international: it has conducted training in the adjacent regions of Afghanistan. Regional and national education institutions, as well as international agencies are using the IPD to implement, pilot, and test many of their education and social programs in the local schools. Consequently, the IPD has become an expert institution and a model, emulated by other IPDs in Tajikistan (AKF-IPD, 2011).

Summing up, like PULSE, the IPD is an example of strategic involvement with globalization through active public–private partnership. Initially with the AKF, and more lately with other international and national agencies, the IPD has revived, adopted, complemented, modified, replaced, reinforced, and corrected a number of reform strategies. In some cases, it expanded the post-socialist reform package (e.g., publication of a newsletter, action research, mentoring, multigrade). The AKF has helped IPD restructure and re-culture itself to (a) become a leading education institution in the country; and (bi) to develop its financial basis through creating an entrepreneurial arm *Logos*. *Logos*, initially an IPD's printing house, expanded to offer fee-based classes in English, Mathematics, Sciences, and computers, “drawing on the IPD and other specialists on percentage payment basis” (Waljee, 2010, p. 215; also IPD's website, <http://www.ipd-gbao.org/tjk>).

Yet, IPD feels constrained by the lack of clear national standards for professional development, ambiguities in the legal framework of rights for education institutions, and a lack of debate on the society's genuine educational needs (Interview with Bulbulov, Director IPD, June 24, 2012). As a state institution, popular among the international agencies, the IPD is caught in the pragmatics of ensuring its loyalty to the state that expects more mandated nation-building role, and the lucrative requests from numerous international agencies, which require promotion of the market-oriented skills and civil society. Waljee (2010) warns that the long-term affiliation with the donors and international agencies may have created a sense of false superiority sense in IPD vis-à-vis other local state agencies.

The IPD presents the global/Western ideas as revived and revised Soviet education practices, making them sound friendly and familiar, with limited delving into the ideological differences. It claims to judge education ideas on the basis of their usefulness and quality, not their source. Such an approach is clearly technical and apologetic. IPD's avoidance of critically engaging the nature and agenda of the Western, Russian-Soviet, and local (including Islamic) ideas could reproduce dependence and a captive mindset (Amsler, 2007) and veer the institution away from its own primarily public and egalitarian mandates (Waljee, 2010). The aforementioned challenge of teacher attrition has impacted IPD's efforts' sustainability (Bulbulov & Niyozov, 2012, in press).

Conclusions: Re-encountering globalization

Using the one-sided demonization of the socialist/communist ideology; the failure of socialist welfare policies; the Soviet citizens' ignorance about neoliberalism and market economy; the

post-Soviet poverty; Islamic ‘threat’; the money and co-optation of the Soviet elite; lack of critical scholarship; and disguising itself as an inevitable and benign road to prosperity for all, neoliberal globalization has tried hard to infiltrate Central Asian societies and educations. This process has largely benefited international agencies, consultants, and the policy elites, but less so the teachers, students, and the marginal and poor in the name of whom the funding and ideas were primarily borrowed and lent (De Young et al., 2006; Heathershaw, 2011; Takala & Piattoeva, 2012). The examples from Central Asia however show that neoliberalist package’s ride into education in the region has not been smooth. Ironically these practices’ and the various transformations have not fulfilled their claims terms of quality, relevance, and equity for all. The crisis of Central Asian education system deepens and broadens.

As comparative and international educators of Central Asian origin, we are both intrigued and dismayed by the remarkable similarity between the use and abuse of globalization in Central Asia and in the rest of the developing world. It is disturbing that despite the tremendous comparative and international research on education and development, the neoliberalist mistakes in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; De Young et al., 2006; Green, Little, Kamat et al., 2007; Klees, 2009; Moyo, 2009) are being repeated in Central Asia (De Young et al., 2006; Freizer, 2005; Silova, 2010). Comparative and international educators, development experts and agencies, and local policy-makers are equally complicit in not just the successes (which they claim) but also, and also the failures (which they usually disclaim or blame on local teachers, students, governments, communities, and cultures). Many development experts and agencies knew about the problems of lending and borrowing and neoliberalism, yet, they rarely highlighted these to Central Asian policy-makers and practitioners. They knew that to reduce education and societal malpractices and failures, a culture of free debate and open scholarship was to be developed; yet they opted for quietism, self-praise, and avoidance of debate. Local elites and policy-makers too should not be absolved of their hypocrisy, double talk, and failure of the genuinely good global policies and practices aimed at improving the lives of the poor and marginal, and making Central Asian education and society more equitable and prosperous. Ideally, local policy makers, jointly with the development experts, should create conditions where *local* and *global* notions of same terms (e.g., critical thinking, cooperative and active learning pedagogies, early child upbringing) are fair-mindedly examined and synthesized into better alternatives. As we saw above, for good or bad, various international agencies, regional forces, local institutions, and individual actors (including teachers) have differentially contested, transformed, adapted, and even failed globalization’s offers in Central Asia (Silova & Steiner Khamsi, 2008). While some used globalization for sustainable local capacities (e.g., IPD, PULSE), others abused it against the very goals they espouse (e.g., gender equity, teacher professionalism, multiculturalism). Sometimes, the same organizations have promoted “shock therapy” or unregulated neoliberalism and capitalism (i.e., World Bank, IMF, the ADB in early 1990s), or have corrected it (e.g., World Bank in the early years of the 2000s; Quality Learning Project/USAID, OSI, AKF). While some scholars have been exposing the problems created by Western aid in education in Central Asia (e.g., De Young, 2005, 2011; Chisholm & Steiner-Khamsi, 2009; Silova, 2005; Shamatov & Sainazarov, 2011; Whitsel, 2009), their effects have been marginal due to language barriers, the limited use of their work by the international agencies, and the money involved in the aid and consultancy.

How could many international development specialists, aware of the hazards of current development approaches during their university studies and work elsewhere (Samoff, 2009), be so ineffective in reversing the negative effects of their efforts in Central Asia? How do we know

that transnational advocacy networks, alternative globalizations, and anti-globalization movements, such as Islamic, Pan-Turkic, African, and Confucian, will not result in the more things change the worse they become? How could Central Asians, who saw the failure of a number of theories, increasingly fall under the sway of new grand narratives such as neoliberalism, nationalism, and Islamism? Alternatively, how can the relatively promising AKF-IPD and OSI-ESRU partnerships in Tajikistan be developed into archipelagos of critical analysis of both local and international policies and practices in the region?⁹

It is never late to assist Central Asia's education systems to correct the current development trajectory. So far, money and prestige have appeared to be more important than the actual implementation of the policies of equity, ecology, social cohesion, and poverty eradication. Central Asian scholars, policy-makers and international justice-oriented scholars and practitioners need to work together in a reflexive mode and for the larger cause. More than "best practices", Central Asian educators, scholars, and policy makers need exposure to research and knowledge production approaches; to critical comparative education scholarship in order to critically read the "best travelling policies", and produce better alternatives.

It is not late for Central Asian and global-justice scholars to jointly develop perspectives, skills, and methods of analyzing globalization, its trends, modus operandi; who benefits and loses from it, and what alternatives might be available in the local tradition and globally. This may include a synthesis of their Soviet, Islamic and the new western ideas. More debate, wider participation, and transparency among globalizers and glocalizers in dealing with globalization is required so as to make it inclusive and equitable to all. There is a need to de-monopolize and de-essentialize the discourse of globalization: While globalization might be desirable and inevitable, neoliberalism is not its only and inevitable option. Honest exposition of the contradictory nature and trends in globalization and its destructive and constructive sides is long due in Central Asia. It may be ironic to state that neoliberalism too is a human construct, and could be re-balanced if there is a genuine will. In addition to drawing insights from the past and outside, new social imaginings should be produced for the post-socialist, post-neoliberal globalized world. Globalization should be engaged not just from pan-Islamic or pan-nationalist standpoints, but also from other standpoints such as neo-Marxist, post-colonial, and political economic perspectives (Adams, 2008, Waljee, 2010).

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9. We raise this cautious question on the basis of the statement made by AKF Tajikistan's senior officer who said there was very limited change toward active learning pedagogies in the schools where IPD was operating. More so, he was dismayed by the overall sense of pessimism in Tajik society about the possibility of equity and the quality of schooling (Niyozov, 2008, p. 25; also see Price-Rom & Sainazarov, 2009).

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