

Book Review
**Understanding Education Policy: The 'Four
Education Orientations' Framework**

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Book Review

Tiffany Jones (2013) attempts to review the previous research related to policy analysis frameworks and examines the educational orientations in order to assert an orientation-based conceptual framework for policy analyses in her book, *Understanding Education Policy: The 'Four Education Orientations' Framework*. The book draws insights for a variety of audiences including undergraduate and graduate students in the education policy area, educators, educational administrators, policy researchers, and policy makers. Jones contributes to the discussion and debates around education policies by making them more understandable through the use of an implicit language.

The book firstly frames a perspective on education policies. The author then examines the orientations, or approaches to education policy, which serve as the foundation of her framework. They consist of conservative, liberal, critical, and post-modern views. Finally, she explains the four-orientation conceptual framework for education policy analysis along with the usage of these four perspectives in the field. The book is divided into six chapters. In the first three chapters, it explains the need for a broader conceptual framework to examine policies, gives the perceptions in construction of policy, and puts Jones's framework into context among existing frameworks. The

second chapter also covers the methods she adopts in her framework by explaining the perceptions of how policy is taken into account as text, value-laden actions, process and discourse. In the fourth chapter, the four education orientations are defined based on orientation ideals, policy production, processes in practice and examples which include beliefs about education, the roles of teachers and students, desired policy impacts and policy research pursuits for each orientation. Furthermore, the fifth chapter discusses the orientation-based conceptual framework over sample analyses and the sixth chapter gives a brief conclusion.

The neo-liberal orientation is highly promoted and dominates today's education policies; however, there is also a growing amount of policy research criticizing the neo-liberal educational movement. As one of the voices critical to the prevalence of the neo-liberal movement, Jones points out that it is better to view the literature by considering discourses from the viewpoint of all four orientations regardless of the dominant perspectives. Her orientation-based conceptual framework includes three aspects: education orientation (a broad description for the selected education policy area), approach (specific to each orientation), and ideology (explanations or key ideas). To find information to apply the framework to the education policy area, she gives the references for each orientation: conservative is related to transmitting dominant and traditional values, liberal is related to knowledge and skills for individual or market choice, and competitive achievement, critical is related to alternative values and attempts to restructure social justice issues, and post-modern is related to exploring multiple or contextually specific approaches and subject positions. Jones suggests using her conceptual framework before completion of a policy analysis, in the formulation of policy, or when simply taking your role in educational policy debates.

In chapter five, Jones gives exemplars for the application of her framework to sexuality and values education policies in the Australian education system. They are produced as a result of pre-readings of policies, theoretical literature, teaching materials, and



media articles, which are then investigated for the promoted and negated practices within the discourses, and the roles ascribed for the stakeholders (p.62). The author emphasizes that the benefits of using the framework are that it is explicit and therefore stakeholders can develop a better understanding of policy and it creates a common language for conflated policy terms (such as conservative and liberal or critical and post-modern) (p.61). It also allows for monitoring of orientation change in policy discourses over time for various policy types, education sectors, and countries.

One of the most crucial contributions of the book, especially for emerging researchers, is that a conceptual framework with multiple perspectives gives an opportunity to clarify the meaning of policy and educational purposes to understand the remarks on policy discourses. At the end of each chapter, the author provides both keywords and tutorial and field activities in which the reader can conceptualize common terms with meaningful explanations. These materials make the book valuable for students conducting their own educational policy analysis projects (e.g. Can you find an advertisement for a school that uses the students' high achievement as a 'selling point' to parents? [p.39] or Name a particular education issue on which advocacy groups, students, social groups or academic activists are currently calling for change? [p.43]). Thus, it was strongly suggested to be used as a course book for education policy research classes using multiple education perspectives.

The given examples related to the orientations and policies may be culturally different, and would require adaptation for use in different countries' policy contexts. In addition, this orientation-based conceptual framework seems methodologically limited to qualitative approaches concerning policy discourses. Moreover, someone that does not already have a firm foundation in the discourses of education policy within the context of the interpretivist approach, and the orientations within the field, may be best served together with further readings. Despite the book's presentation of a solely conceptual framework based on mapping the discursive composition

of education policies, the book does provide an excellent background on multiple education perspectives.

References

Jones, T. (2013). *Understanding education policy: The 'four education orientations' framework*. New York London: Springer. Pp. 76. ISBN 978-94-007-6264-6265-7.

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