

Educational Reform Hyperwaves: Reconceptualizing Cuban's Theories of Change

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Abstract

The present work builds on Cuban's (Educ Res 19(1):3–13, 1990) seminal work on reform waves. The research explores reform waves in Israeli educational policies since 2000s. The historical case study analysis focuses on conservative and liberal–progressive reforms in education, and reveals that these reforms took place as reoccurring alternating cycles, connected with political and institutional pressures that promote reform waves. The paper argues, however, that it is necessary to further develop Cuban's theory because it does not provide an explanation for the temporal frequency of reform waves. The paper suggests betwixt and between situations as factors pushing reform waves into hyperdrive. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications of reform hyperwaves.

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The concept of reform in schooling can be traced back to the mid-19th century (Cuban, 1990; Katz, 1968). As the idea of top-down planned change in the school system grew in popularity and legitimacy, large-scale reforms in education were perceived as a policy agenda that has merit. The first large-scale reform was documented in the US in the early 1960s, and it was focused on the idea of racial integration (Gittell, 1968). Since then, large-scale reforms have become a “natural” part of modern schooling. Fullan (2000) identified three types of possible large-scale reforms: (a) a change in all schools included in a given geographical area; (b) a change in hundreds of schools and an attempt to adapt them to a particular model; and (c) a change in all schools at the national level. The present paper focuses on the last type.

Despite the popularity of systemic reforms in education in the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st, they have often been portrayed as partly or fully failing to achieve their goals (Gaziel, 2010). This pattern of emergence and failure of reforms has been investigated by Cuban in 1990, in his influential paper "Reforming again, again, and again." Cuban explored the educational policies in the US from a historical perspective, and found that specific reform plans return again and again, forming *reform waves*. In general, patterns of reforms are under-theorized and underexplored. Cuban (1990) offered possible explanations for the periodic emergence and failure of reforms. The present article expands Cuban's work by attempting to understand the enhancers involved in the phenomenon of reform waves. The current work suggests that the combination of demographic, cultural, religious, and political shifts at the national level, alongside external pressures due to the geopolitical surrounding, play a fundamental role in triggering reform waves. Specifically, this work focuses on extreme manifestations of reform waves, which I term "*hyperwaves*." Such hyperwaves occurred in education policies Israel over the 2000-2015 period, manifested in intense restructuring of the education system over a short period of time. This case study above you referred to it as research aims to provide new insight into the shortening cycles of reform waves in education and factors involved pushing reform waves into hyperdrive.

The paper contains seven parts. The first part elaborates on why policymakers in education prefer systemic reforms as their primary policy strategy. The second part addresses temporal aspects related to modeling reforms. In the third part I outline the

rationalist and non-rationalist modeling of reform waves, following Cuban's work. The fourth part describes the context of the study and the case study method. The fifth part presents the reform waves in the Israeli context and discusses the role of political and institutional pressures. In the sixth part, I develop Cuban's work by addressing internal and external *betwixt and between* (i.e., neither here nor there) situations as possible factors that affect the temporal frequency of reform waves and push them into hyperdrive. Lastly, I address the likely implications of periodic hyperwaves for the educational policy discourse, paying particular attention to the transition to symbol-based discourse in education (i.e., *hyperrealistic* policymaking).

The Rise of Systemic Reform as A Key Policy Strategy in Education

Traditionally, a reform involves changing one or more aspects of the education system, usually a systemic or large-scale change aimed at achieving a definite set of objectives. The literature has identified several main types of educational reform (Elmore, 1995; Fullan, 1992; Zohar, 2013). The first type includes structural or managerial reforms, designed to influence student achievement by redistribution of formal authorities and responsibilities between the different levels of the education system. At times these are referred to as market-based reforms because they integrate components from the business world into the educational arena. The second type includes curriculum reforms, designed to influence student learning and achievement by changing the curricula. The third type involves pedagogical or instructional reforms, designed to influence student achievement by changing the content delivery and teaching methods, or the process of training and developing teachers. Often, integrative reforms are initiated, aimed at changing both instructional and curricular aspects. Reforms aim to change the system. Their underlying assumption is that reform is followed by a period of adjustment and stability, ultimately leading to greater coherence in the focus of the system (Cohen, 1995). At the same time, although systemic reforms in education have become a central strategy of policymakers, these reforms are perceived by both researchers and the public as failing rather than succeeding in achieving their goals (Gaziel, 2010; Hess, 2010).

The failure of systemic reforms has caught the attention of the educational policy research community, which responded with functional analysis of the causes of failure and produced prescriptions for ideal reforming. One strand in the literature

attributes reform failures to policymakers' simplistic presumptions about teaching (Cohen, 1995; Hess, 2010), claiming that schools are durable institutions, resistant to external change. For example, Eisner (1992) argues that the teachers undergo prolonged socialization beginning in their days as students in the system. He advocates for holistic thinking in reform planning that produces a comprehensive new ecology of schooling (i.e., its goals, organizational structure, curriculum, and methods of teaching and assessment) (Eisner, 2000).

A second strand of functionalistic works identifies the gap between the declared reform goals and the implementation as the reason for reform failure. For example, Sarason (1996) drew the attention of policymakers to the existence of both organizational and behavioral regularities in schools, and argued that changes in both are essential for producing lasting change in schools. According to him, the problem stems from reform attempts to change existing regularities, eliminating some of them, or to produce new regularities (changes introduced only in organizational regularities with the expectation of eventually changing behavioral regularities). Scholars have argued that change requires effort and time for learning and producing transformation in behavioral regularities. Frequently, however, when teachers are implementing the reform, they automatically apply the changes without deep processing or learning (Eisner, 1992). These explanations focus on specific reform episodes, but the historical perspective requires a better understanding of the temporal dynamics of reforms and reform waves.

Temporal Aspects Related to Modeling Reforms

Time is a central “unit idea” in policy research (Cowen, 2006), but reflection on time is lacking in the policy literature. Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003) have argued that most often time is defined chronologically and used to represent change. Modeling temporal aspects in policy research is extremely difficult, and it frequently involves axioms that researcher uses to minimize the cognitive complexity of models. For example, Buthe (2002) drew attention to the simplicities dominating the temporal modeling of policy processes. According to him, it often involves assumptions about a stable “dynamic” that ignores the possibility of change in institutions and in their preferences, and often incorporates circular reasoning in the sequence of policy change, as independent variables are endogenized. To further complicate matters, the

discussions of temporal aspects and of geopolitical-spatial aspects in policy analysis has been suggested to be largely intertwined, particularly in the global era, as change processes occur in a given context (Cowen, 2006; Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003). Thus, each type of trans-national policy transfer has a different “syntax” of temporal change (Cowen, 2006).

A popular conceptual approach to modeling sequencing policy dynamics is path dependence, according to which a critical event punctures the equilibrium, stimulating and guiding the following events along a new course (Howlett, 2009). This approach seem to dominate the leading models of policy borrowing in education (e.g., Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). For example, according to Phillips and Ochs’s (2003) policy borrowing model, various impulses (e.g., internal dissatisfaction, systemic collapse, negative external evaluation, economic change or competition, novel configurations, innovation in knowledge and skills, and political change) lead policymakers to seek and adopt external policy programs. Similar ideas appear also in Steiner-Khamsi’s (2014) model of policy borrowing during the externalization stage, when specific policies are borrowed. These models adopt largely linear reasoning, and are highly effective in explaining the progression of policy borrowing, but suffer from several shortcomings, two of which are relevant to the focus of the present paper: (a) the models lack differential diagnosis of place and time of policy borrowing, as one or more of the impulses to borrow exist in most countries and because today systems operate in an saturated environment of “well-travelled” neo-liberal reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014); and (b) the models lack assumptions about cycles of policies because the they were constructed to describe one policy episode. Although these global models acknowledge repeating reform events (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014), they do not shed light on the expected duration of an "imported policy" in a given national context, and on the relation between events.

Rationalist and Non-rationalist Modeling of Reform Waves

Reform cycles in education have been documented in several educational systems. Scholars have identified reform waves in the US (Henig & Stone, 2008; Mehta, 2015; Payne, 2008). Mehta (2015) suggested that “policy entrepreneurs” are instrumental in mobilizing a sense of crisis for the purpose of promoting their ideals,

which results in reform cycles. Others have identified problems in implementation, which have led to reform cycles. For example, Payne (2008) has argued that reforms are unilaterally applied based on the assumption that schools are rational; however, in dysfunctional schools reforms often escalate the condition. And a third view pointed at planning-implantation gap as a source of persistent failure and reform cycles. For example, Henig and Stone (2008) suggested that differences in abstract policy models at the national level, and in pragmatic models at the local level, are partly related to the failure and recurrence of reform efforts. Reform cycles have been reported also in other countries such as Croatia (e.g., Kovač, Rafajac & Buchberger, 2014) and Italy (e.g., Viteritti, 2009) in Europe, as well as in Japan (e.g., Takayama, 2007).

One of the most notable theoretical frameworks used to understand the recurrence of reforms is Larry Cuban's (1990) work. Cuban, a historian of education, offers a broad understanding of reform chronology. He examined retrospectively the various reforms in the US over a period of one hundred years. For example, he described how the relationship between teacher and learner and the perception of classroom management changed throughout US history in a series of reforms, alternating between the conservative and the liberal-progressive model. The transition between the two models is not a marginal change, the two approaches being perceived as highly different, if not conflicting (Jones, 2009). The conservative approach values authoritarian teaching, conceptualizes students as passive knowledge receptors, and frequently sets the goal of education as preparing students for adult work life and integration in social structure. Conservative values have often manifested in curricula that address civic education or vocational education, and in pedagogical methods of frontal teaching and rigid disciplinary policy in schools. The liberal-progressive approach aspires to develop individualistic values and autonomous learners. A curriculum inspired by liberal-progressive ideas often deals with morality, personal choice, and self-fulfillment. It uses pedagogical methods characterized by democratic schooling practices and by instructional focus on cognitive and emotional areas, group discussion, and self-work.

Cuban (1990) noted that it is possible to suggest two main rationalist explanations of the dynamics of reform waves. The first one is linked to the swinging pendulum metaphor: policymakers are trying to achieve the right quantity and quality of change, but finding the proper balance is difficult and requires multiple

iterations. The second one assumes a value-driven two-phase cycle. According to this explanation, reform waves originate in economic conditions that affect the national sentiment and determine the identity and agenda of elected politicians who act to promote their constituents' wishes. This view suggests that these economic-political cycles have a predetermined duration of 10-15 years.

Cuban opposed these two explanations and argued that they were not supported by empirical evidence. He offered two of his own, which he viewed as more relevant to reform waves: a political explanation, which argues that in times of economic instability and conflicts of values politicians turn (out of authentic or manipulative motivations) to the education system, because education is perceived by the general public as a reliable instrument of improvement of society; and an institutional explanation, according to which schools are dependent organizations, for whom legitimacy is important because they depend on public funds and public support for their operation. Therefore, education is highly sensitive to social pressure and responds to it quickly (if often superficially) to reaffirm its legitimacy. Note that Cuban addressed these two non-rationalist explanations of reform waves rather briefly, without going into details or exemplifying them. Thus, additional research can be helpful in illustrating the effects of political and institutional pressures on producing reform waves.

Moreover, further study can help uncover the psychological effects of reform waves on educators, which have not been discussed by Cuban. One work that sheds some light on such outcomes is the study by Nóvoa and Yariv-Mashal (2003). The authors suggest adopting a multifaceted psychological perspective on time, as draw attention to its “width” and “thickness.” Width captures the present, which holds multiple meaning schemes such as “memories” and “imagination.” Thickness captures overlapping temporalities related to historical layers of power-relations, culture, and identity (Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003). It is possible that working in a climate of reform waves produces a psychological experience of the current reform being intertwined with memories of past reforms and imaginations about future reforms; by contrast, experiences overlap reform layers that affect educators' professional culture and identity. Thus, additional research can also expand our understanding of this topic.

Method

Description of Context

Israel is a small country (21, 643 square km) located in the southwestern edge of Asia, in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. The country has a democratic-parliamentary regime (Rahat and Sheaffer, 2007). In 2014, the country had a population of 8,296,900 inhabitants, with a high partiality rate relative to modern developed countries (28.3% of the population at ages 0-14) (CBS, 2015). The population is composed of 79.3% Jews and 20.7% Arabs (mostly Muslims) (CBS, 2015). The Israeli GDP (PPP) is \$273 billion (CBS, 2015); income distribution equality is quite high for developed countries, with a GINI coefficient of 42.8 (CIA, 2012).

Israel is an ideal site for examining reform waves in education. The Israeli education system is mostly publicly owned, funded, and operated, with its governance based primarily on a centralized bureaucratic hierarchy (Berkovich, 2014; Nir & Inbar, 2003). Because of centralized governance, the public education system in Israel has been the target of multiple systemic reforms throughout its history. In particular, the integration reform in the 1970s stand out, having adopted the three-level structure (primary, junior high, high) to replace the previous two-level structure, and the zoning that drove ethnic and socio-economic integration (Resh & Dar, 2012). Since the mid-1980s, the system experienced decentralization and privatization, which, however, remained marginal until the early 2000s, when the system adopted standardization and evaluation more widely (Berkovich, 2014; Feniger et al., 2012; Ichilov, 2009). Still, the Israeli education system and governance are quite far from being under a pure neoliberal regime, and they contain strong public elements (Berkovich, 2014).

Case Study Method

The present work is a case study. The case study method focuses on a unique case or phenomenon, aiming to provide a rich description of the case (Merriam, 1988). Stake (2005) suggested that “how” and “why” questions are often in the focus of a case study investigation. The current research is a historical case study that involves a longitudinal examination of the case selected (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). This type of case study can be classified as interpretive, because it aims both to illustrate

and to develop the theoretical assumptions based on the data collected (Merriam, 1988, 1998).

Data Sources

The data sources for the present research included national policy reports on education; formal documents of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Israeli Knesset; newspapers articles; TV news reports; research works that capture the historical process and the context in which Israeli educational policy making took place; retrospective accounts of former education ministers and officials; publications of international agencies (e.g., the OECD and World Bank) about Israel; and data from qualitative studies that included interviews with principals and teachers.

Analysis and Trustworthiness

In the analysis of this historical case study. I aimed to discover general trends and characteristics of the selected case (Stake, 2005). The analysis sought to break down the circumstances of the case to uncover its features and effects on the phenomenon of interest (Eisenhardt, 1989). The objective of the analysis was to achieve descriptive richness that "takes into account the possibility of historical and multiple conjunctural causation and path dependence" (Amenta, 2009, p. 357). Note that both case selection and analysis were dictated by the theoretical framework (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994).

The case study method is qualitative in nature, therefore the researcher is a central instrument in the analytic process (Golafshani, 2003). I took several measures to address possible biases stemming from this circumstance. First, I used multiple data sources, which enabled me to achieve triangulation and identify consistency of findings across sources (Patton, 2002). Second, I adopted reflexivity to minimize possible biases having to do with the researcher's viewpoints or life experiences (Morrow, 2005). As a researcher involved and influenced by educational policies, I naturally support a certain agenda in education. At the same time, the prolonged time period explored in the present study included various ministers whose agendas I found more and less to my liking. I am also aware of my position as a scholar whose work rests largely on criticism of the bounded rationality of policymakers and of the failures of reforms. Third, to assure that my interpretive analysis is consistent with the rigorous qualitative criteria of confirmability (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I used peer

debriefing to ensure that the research process and analysis were reasonably neutral and unbiased (Creswell & Miller 2000).

Findings

The present study focuses on large-scale national reforms aimed at changing both the instructional and curricular aspects of public schooling in Israel. I use the term “reform” not in its limited interpretation (i.e., a pre-arranged package of policies that has been labeled as such) but in its broader sense (i.e., a package of highly interconnected policies implemented under a specific leadership). I present the case study in two parts: first, I describe the intense reform waves (i.e., hyperwaves) and their political and institutional drivers; next, I suggest betwixt and between situations as a key amplifier of the effects of political and institutional processes on reform waves, pushing them into hyperdrive.

Reform Hyperwaves in Israel

Since the beginning of the 21st century, we detect five waves of reforms alternating between progressive-liberal and conservative agendas: a conservative wave (2001-2006); a progressive wave (2006-2009); a conservative wave (2009-2013); a progressive wave (2013-2014); a conservative wave (2015-present). The reforms involved five Ministers of Education: Limor Livnat (Likud, right-wing party); Yuli Tamir (HaAvoda, left-wing party); Gideon Saar (Likud, right-wing party); Shai Piron (Yesh Atid, center-left party); Naftali Bennett (HaBayit HaYehudi, religious-right party) (see timeline in Figure 1).

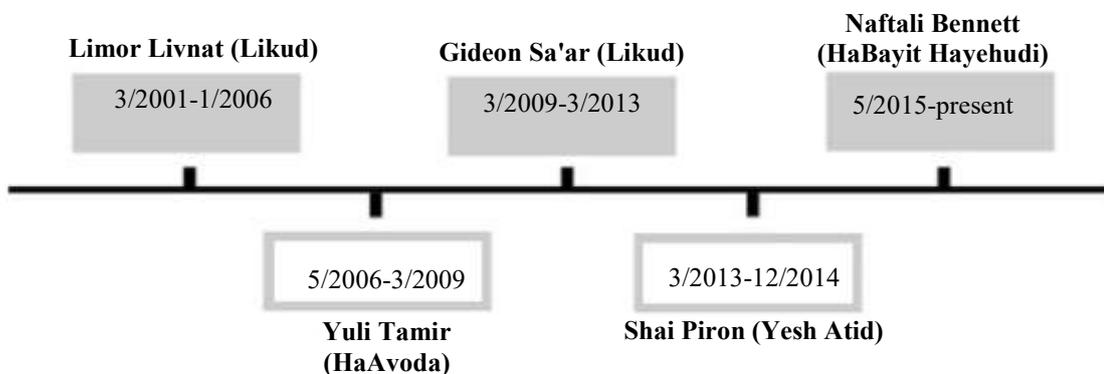


Figure 1. Timeline of Ministers of Education in Israel since 2000s. Two ministers who served for less than six months were omitted; the political party of the minister is

noted in brackets. Gray squares represent conservative periods; white squares represent liberal-progressive periods.

Conservative wave. Under Limor Livnat (2001-2006), the Education Ministry introduced several conservative policies in the Israeli public system. Among these curricular and pedagogical initiatives are: (a) Introduction of national achievement tests (known as “*the Meitzav*”) in 2003 (Director-General's Circular, 2003/1(a), 3.1-22); (b) introduction of a mandatory core curriculum in primary schooling (Director-General's Circular, 2003/1(a), 3.1-22); (c) establishment of the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (known as *RAMA*) in 2005 (State Comptroller, 2008); (d) launching of the "100 Concepts" program—teaching students a list of mandatory basic concepts in Zionism, Judaism, and democracy, included in the *Meitzav* test (Israeli Parliament, 2007); (e) setting up a committee to formulate a program for completing the restructuring of the public system based on principles of decentralization and curricular standardization (known as the “Dovrat Committee”) (Ministry of Education, 2005); (f) encouraging military service by mandating the study of military heritage, budgeting NGOs engaged in this area that operate in schools, and initiating visits by military officers in secondary schools to improve the percentage of recruitment (Zelikovich & Greenberg, 2004, December 17); and (g) promoting national feelings in schools (such as raising of the flag and singing the national anthem) (Walla!News, 2001, May 29).

Liberal-progressive wave. This conservative period, was followed by a wave of liberal initiatives. Under Yuli Tamir (2006-2009) , the Ministry of Education initiated several liberal policies: (a) introduction of the New Horizon collective wage agreement (known as *Ofek Hadash*) in the public primary system, which allocated individual and small group tutoring hours, expanding personal contact between teacher and student (State of Israel, 2008); (b) launching of the Pedagogical Horizon initiative (known as *Ofek Pedagogi*), aimed at shifting focus in learning from memorizing to higher-order thinking, including a plan for changing the matriculation exams (Pedagogical Secretariat at the Ministry of Education, 2009); (c) adding to the conventional high-school diploma (matriculation certificate) a social contribution diploma, emphasizing volunteer work in the community (Lazar, 2007, March 29); and

(d) doubling the scope of mandatory civics education grounded in liberal and multicultural democratic ideals (Walla!News, 2006, June 26).

Conservative wave. Under Gideon Sa'ar (2009-2013), the Ministry of Education embraced the conservative approach. The initiatives included: (a) a range of programs aimed at strengthening students' national values, mostly by visiting heritage sites (Nesher & Levinson, 2012, February 2); (b) school activities that promote military service (Nesher, 2012, June 12); (c) setting official goals for achieving higher ranking in international tests and adding teaching hours on test-related subjects (e.g., mathematics) (Ministry of Education, 2010); and (d) launching the Courage to Change collective wage agreement (known as *Oz Letmura*), which introduced individual and small group tutoring hours with specific attention paid to students' achievements, including rewarding teachers financially for their efforts (State of Israel, 2011).

Liberal-progressive wave. After Sa'ar was replaced by Shai Piron as Minister of Education, a relatively more liberal agenda emerged from the Ministry (2013-2014). It promoted the following policies: (a) freezing the national testing program (i.e., *Meitzav*) with the aim to further space its administration (Hai, 2013, August 12); (b) launching of the "Israel is moving up a grade" (known as *Israel Ola Kita*) plan aimed at restructuring the matriculation testing regime by reducing the number of tests and mandating "meaningful learning" tasks based on learners' self-drive to develop thinking and creativity skills (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Conservative wave. Piron's time in the office was quite short, and he was followed by Naftali Bennett (2015-present). Bennett advanced several conservative policies: (a) launching of a program focused on mathematics and aimed at doubling the number of students taking the highest level (five units) math matriculation test, "Give 5!" (known as *Latet Hamesh*) (Odem, 2015, August 30; Ministry of Education, 2015); (b) restructuring the arts and culture enrichment program to include only components that are consistent with national values (Avitan Cohen, 2016, February 18); (c) prohibiting the appearances in schools of NGOs that criticize the army (Walla!News, 2015, December 15); and (d) altering the nature of mandatory civics education to reflect republican democratic ideals (Kashti, 2015, November 13).

In such a hyperactive policy climate, educators are being presented with a new set of demands (Vincent, Neal, & Iqbal, 2016), and they need to constantly juggle irreconcilable priorities, high workload, and personal values and motives (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). Interviews with principals and teachers, conducted during the same period in Israel (Avgar, Berkovich, & Shalev-Vigiser, 2012), and addressing the effects of frequently changing national policies on educational practice, suggest that frequent reforms create a chaotic and stressful work atmosphere. For example, one teacher commented that "The constant demands of the Ministry of Education is making things harder... These demands do not fit in very well with each other." Principals also expressed a similar mindset: "The Ministry of Education is a problem for all schools in Israel. It cannot drive a policy for years, because it is political. It allocates budgets for a year or two [but] by the time we learn to live with it, the minister and the policy have changed." Several teachers and principals suggested that they work "by the book" and follow the instructions of the Ministry of Education, but others acknowledged otherwise. Teacher: "I'm a bit flexible. I'm taking the law into my own hands. The Ministry of Education has created one big mess, and we are trying to sort out the good and the bad things;" principal: "I'm 'cutting corners' left and right," at the cost of high stress and reduced wellbeing. Parallel policy-in-experience accounts (Guba, 1984) of Israeli educational personnel during implementation of reforms surfaced not only in my own interviews but also in interviews conducted by other researchers. For example, Schechter and Shaked (2017) reported on a similar figurative comment by an Israeli principal: "I'm like a puppet on a string; someone [at the Ministry of Education] decides, moves, and determines what must be done, and I have to perform" (p. 251). The reactions of the education sector to Ministry policies varied locally, depending, among others, on whether principals chose to adopt the role of bridging or buffering reforms (Shaked & Schechter, 2017), and on teachers' sense of agency.

Drivers of Reform Waves

Following Cuban's (1990) work, I suggest that these alternating waves of reform can be linked to two groups of factors: political processes and institutional pressures that foster reform waves. With regard to political processes, Cuban proposes that "[w]hen economic, social, and demographic changes create social turmoil, public

opinion shifts" (p. 8). Reacting to social turbulence, the government turns to the education system as a remedy to a problematic situation, motivated either by a genuine intention of change or by manipulative elites wishing to perpetuate the social *status quo*. The reformative drive is fuelled by the inherently conflicting values of education, and reform becomes a battle ground for various interest groups.

This dynamic is even more complex in societies characterized by socioeconomic and ethnic diversity. Easterly, Ritzen, and Woolcock (2006) argued that politicians operating in complex, highly diverse socioeconomic and multi-ethnic environments often resort to adopting bad policies to achieve broad agreement. The authors noted that social cohesion can also affect the capability of the country to implement policy reforms. Social cohesion characterizes "common values and purpose in a society, including a sense of belonging and solidarity of people from diverse backgrounds" (Cheong et al., 2007, p. 28). Israel, which started out as a highly diversified country, has seen increasing diversification over the years as a result of economic, social, and demographic changes.

First, demographic *status quo* in Israel has been gradually changing since the early 1990s. Between the years, 1990-2008, there has been an increase in the percentages of the two minority population groups: ultra-Orthodox Jews grew from 3% to 9% of Jewish Israeli society, and the Arab population grew from 18% to 24% of general Israeli society (Ravhon & Malach, 2009). The post-Soviet immigration of Jews in the 1990s, which included a mostly secular population, produced a sharp growth of over one million of people (an increase of 20% in the population of the late 1980s). Researchers have noted similar changes in student population: increases in the percentages of ultra-Orthodox Jewish students from 13% to 19% and of Arab students from 24% to 26% between, 2000-2014 (Blass, 2014). Mathias and Sabar (2004) pointed to the early 1990s as the beginning of a second period, characterized by a greater pluralism in curricula, and regarded this fact as being strongly related to key demographic changes involving not only the population growth of ultra-Orthodox Jews and of Arabs but also the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union. The educational curriculum during this period was uniform and emphasized national values, with some focus on egalitarian ideas aimed to serve as a melting pot for a multi-ethnic society characterized by immigration (Mathias & Sabar, 2004). Because Israel is a highly diversified society, multiculturalism has become part of public

discourse. But this discourse reveals a conflict between those who view multiculturalism as a communal national project aimed at promoting solidarity and those who view it as a libertarian project (Yonah & Shenhav, 2005).

Second, the Israeli political space is characterized by several social rifts, with two of these generating considerable attention: one originates in a national conflict, the other that in a cultural-religious conflict. Since the establishment of the State in 1948, the Israeli-Jewish segment of the population has been in continuous conflict with the soundings Arab countries, a conflict that several times broke into open war. The conflict also provoked lasting tensions between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs (residing within the 1948 State lines) and, to a greater extent, with the Palestinian Arabs who became part of Israeli population in 1967. The second intifada of 2000 and the continuing conflict shaped the discourse between Israeli Arabs and the Jewish State (Yonah et al., 2008). According to Pinson (2007), Israeli education system always had two parallel goals: formation of state and nation-building. The strain between the two, however, has become more apparent in recent years, particularly in civics education, as the tension between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis intensified. In addition to national tension, there is also religious tension in Israel: about 45% of the Israeli Jewish population define themselves as secular, about 10% as ultra-Orthodox, about 35% as moderately religious (traditional), and the rest as religious (CBS, 2015). Ben-Porat and Feniger (2012) argued that the cultural war between the secular and religious camps is indirect and frequently takes place *ad hoc*, around specific issues, producing a dynamic of fragmented conflict.

Third, Israel, as part of the globalized market, suffered from the negative effects of the 2003 and 2008 global economic crises. Both crises ignited concerns about the ability of the Israeli education system and of its future graduates to compete in the global economy (Feniger et al., 2012; Yonah et al., 2008). The global crisis of 2003 was particularly painful, as it led to a dramatic reduction in government spending on public services, including education (Yonah et al., 2008). In 2011, in parallel with the international wave of social movements, a local public movement emerged, demonstrating in the streets and demanding higher government involvement in the regulation and provision of public services and of basic necessities (Avigur-Eshel, 2014).

The political processes mobilized by these demographic, cultural, religious, and economic shifts included the government turning to the education system to solve the problematic situation. One example of a response by Israeli government to these shifts is the core curriculum adopted by minister Livant as a key item of agenda. Although it is difficult to differentiate between authentic and manipulative intentions in policymaking, it seems that the response in question partly served the interests of the Israeli secular Ashkenazi (Jewish ethnic) elite in power, which had been in a hegemonic position since the establishment of the state. The demographic growth of other social groups was threatening the hegemonic position of secular Ashkenazi's and the attendant privileges of this position (Kimmerling, 2001). Therefore, the government saw the core curriculum, among others, as a tool for maintaining its power to control resource allocation and to impose their preferred knowledge and values upon other groups (Markman & Yonah, 2010).

According to Cuban (1990), in addition to political processes, institutional pressures also play a role in the dynamics of reform waves. The schooling system needs to "retain support from their constituencies who provide children and dollars" (Cuban, 1990, p. 10). Institutional theory addresses the effect of social elements and cultural expectations linked with the external environment of organizations that constrain their autonomous decision-making (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in highly institutional environments there are increasing social and cultural pressures (i.e., isomorphism pressures) that are likely to lead organizations to embrace similar processes and structure. The researchers noted three types of pressures: (a) coercive isomorphism, which occurs when one organization depends on another for unique knowledge or budget; (b) mimetic isomorphism, which occurs when objectives are not clear or environmental dynamism grows, leading one organization to imitate another that is commonly perceived to be successful; and (c) normative isomorphism, which occurs when a standardized training procedure is established in a particular field, and people's norms and conceptions about what constitutes a professional become similar.

In the context of isomorphic pressures in Israel, I would like to discuss the involvement of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international organization that aims to promote economic progress and serve as an advisory and coordinating body for its members on a range of policy

domains. The OECD is described as the most influential international agency because of its unique strategies that address a range of policy fields, its strong technical expertise, and because it produces and sustains trans-national collaborations of national experts (Sellar & Lingard, 2014). The OECD is said to exercise its power through four modes of domination (Woodward, 2009): (a) cognitive domination, manifest in the exclusive selection of members based on similarity of commitment to liberalism and market ideals; (b) normative domination, exercised by developing new epistemology and cultivating supportive academic communities at the national level; (c) legal domination, achieved by official contracts, monitoring, and peer pressure; and (d) palliative domination, achieved by tactical behavior that pursue opportunities in global discourse.

Israel applied to join the OECD in 2004 (Israel Ministry of Finance, 2006) and in 2010 was invited to join as a member (OECD, n.d.). The OECD advises in various policy domains, but its effect on education is central in the present-day global discourse. The cognitive and normative modes of the OECD are central in forming the "soft" power of the organization and its extensive influence at the national level (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). The stance of OECD on educational policy is dualistic in nature: on one hand, it emphasizes higher achievements in standardized testing, and achieving high ranking in international education league tables (Feniger & Lefstein, 2014); on the other hand, it suggests that the education system needs to invest in developing non-standardized teaching and promoting student creativity (Schleicher, 2011). Undoubtedly, standardized testing is more dominant because it considered to be indicator of future economic competitiveness of a nation. In 2003, Israeli policymakers and the public dealt extensively with the decline of Israel in international test ranking from the top of the developed countries in the 1960s to the lower third among participating countries in TIMSS, 1999, and near the bottom of the PISA, 2000 ranking (Feniger et al., 2012). As a result of public shock at Israel's ranking, new educational policies were considered to be adopted or imitated (Feniger et al., 2012).

The isomorphic pressures of OECD not only operate indirectly, through ranking, but also exercise a direct influence by "persuading" the political leadership. Every couple of years, the organization holds a meeting of education ministers (in 2001 in Paris, in 2006 in Athens, in 2010 in Paris). The topics addressed include, for

example, lifelong learning (2001), improving quality, governance, equity, and funding in higher education (2006), and investing in human and social capital (2010). The conference also publishes a variety of policy analysis reports and policy recommendations directed at the participating ministers. Israel attended two of these conferences. The OECD also invests in personal persuasion of ministers, officials, and academics to generate support for its policies. Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Directorate of Education and Skills, is a key member of the OECD Senior Management team and plays a fundamental role in promoting the current global educational discourse through international assessments. Schleicher visited Israel several times in recent decades, met with ministers and directors in the Ministry of Education, participated in conferences (e.g., the ITEC Van Leer Education Conference on teachers and teaching policies, in 2010; the Initiative for Applied Education Research on Pedagogy in the Age of Information, in 2011; and the Jerusalem Education Conference on measurement and assessment, in 2013) and gave interviews aimed at promoting the OECD ideas on education among Israeli academics and the public. The Israeli newspapers labeled Schleicher as "the world education minister" (Dattel, 2013, February 17; Kasthi, 2009, May 5). Tamir (2014), a former Israeli Minister of Education (2006-2009), suggested that the authority of the OECD in the global discourse is connected with two additional isomorphic tools: (a) the PISA database, which is the largest database in education, generating centralized power in the age of knowledge; and (b) the OECD action in promoting in each country a local network (adapting and administering PISA) that depends on contiguous international testing.

The Missing Piece: Betwixt and Between Situations as Hyperdrivers of Reform Waves

As the Israeli case study demonstrates, Cuban's explanations go a long way, but still lack explanatory power regarding the *temporal frequency* of the reform waves; in this, the Israeli case can contribute new insights. A high level of political and institutional pressures has been documented in Israel from the mid-20th century onward. Since the 1960s, Israel has been an extremely diverse society nationally, ethnically, and socio-economically. This diversification has produced conflicts and social turmoil (Gordon, 1989; Kolack & Kolack, 1968; Smooha, 1978). Israel was one of the first countries to join the IEA international achievement test in math in the mid-

1960s (Feniger et al., 2012). Since the beginning of the 21st century, the isomorphic power of globalization has affected many nations, but most other countries did not display the reform hyperwaves dynamic. Former Minister of Education, Tamir, shared an anecdote about the OECD meeting of education ministers in 2006, where Schleicher beautifully presented how excellence in PISA tests promote economic growth. Tamir said: "Education ministers applauded and enthusiastically followed Schleicher's guidance on how to promote their educational system" (Tamir, 2014, p. 38). It is therefore necessary to further contemplate possible enhancers of the predictors that Cuban suggested.

I suggest that political and institutional processes intensify reform waves in a given national context and hyperdrive the reform waves in situations of "internal betwixt and between" and "external betwixt and between." The concept of betwixt and between identifies a situation in which neither one nor the other of two well-defined properties may be applied and thus it is greatly related to the notion of liminality (Turner, 1969). Internal betwixt and between in our case is related to political instability, i.e., the propensity of a country to experience frequent changes of regime or government (World Bank, 2013). Without going into the causes of political instability, in general, researchers argue that political stability enables policymakers to plan education policies for the long term and execute strategic plans more meticulously (Nir & Sharma Kafle, 2013). The issue of political instability is central to understanding current reform hyperwaves in the Israeli education system. Since the establishment of the state in 1948 and until the late 1970s, there was a period of political stability during which a single political party, Mapai, was the dominant force in Israeli politics and in practice ran all aspects of the state (Medding, 2010).

Barnea, Driisfitz, and Koenig (2013) investigated various indices of political stability in Israel and found that there has been greater government destabilization since the early 1990s, manifested mainly in internal stability. Their research found that the number of changes in the identity of coalition partners has multiplied by 4.3 times since 1990, meaning that Israel experiences more frequent changes in the composition of its governments (Barnea et al., 2013). The research also indicates that the rate of turnover between government ministers has doubled since 1990, meaning that ministers spend less time in office (Barnea et al., 2013). The short-lived tenures of ministers is related to the higher prevalence of structural opportunities for policy

changes. In his policy streams theory, John Kingdon (2010) suggested that among the multiple (problem, solution, and politics) streams, the latter is the most important, because only when policy windows opens entrepreneurs can promote their solutions for problems and mobilize change.

This political instability is not only a structural matter but it is reflected in the mindsets of politicians and of the public in Israel. For example, MK Moshe Gafni argued in the Israeli parliament:

This reality in which governments are replaced and do not finish a full term, this phenomenon should be dealt with... People are tired of going to elections every time. Government should govern, and what happens when governments and ministers change every year or two, actually leads to the rule of the public service officials" (Moshe Gafni, meeting No. 24 of the Knesset, May, 20, 2009, cited in Barnea, Driisfitz, and Koenig, 2013).

Public opinion reflects this reality. Annual surveys show that the Israeli public senses that the political system in Israel is much less stable than in other democracies: an average of 55.5% of participants reported a sense of instability between, 2003-2009 (Barnea et al., 2013). After over a decade and half of alternating educational reforms, the general sentiment of the Israeli public is expressed in a Channel 10 News report (one of three mainstream television channels): "These [minsters of education] know that their time in office is short, and want to make their mark by stopping the reforms of their predecessors and create new reforms, which generally remain in effect until the arrival of the new minister, and so on. The system goes crazy. Schools are confused, and the education system, which requires stability above all, suffers from massive turbulence" (2014, December 13).

I argue the hyperwaves are affected not only by internal betwixt and between owing to political instability, but also by external betwixt and between in the context of international relations. External betwixt and between involves an absence of a clear "outside," so that an entity and the external environment are never detached, and the in-between situation allows permeability although it enables separateness (Mälksoo, 2012). Following the argument that geographic and cultural distance plays a role in shaping different outcomes of globalization processes (Welmond, 2002), I contend that semi-peripheries serving as middle tiers between developed and undeveloped

regions (Moore & Worth, 2009) are more radically influenced by globalization because of their liminal position. This type of external betwixt and between has been previously discussed by Higgott and Nossal (1997), who describe the self-conscious efforts of Australia, in the 1990s, to reposition the country's regional affiliation to the newly rising geo-political power center in the Asia Pacific region, by redirecting its political, economic, diplomatic, and military efforts for this purpose. Because of its geographic, cultural, and economic relations, Israel sees Europe as a key reference point, an issue that has gained increasing influence on Israeli policies with the formation of the European Union (EU) in mid-1990s, and particularly the formation of the monetary union (Eurozone) in the early 2000s (Del Sarto, 2006; Greilsammer & Weiler, 1988).

The formation of a supra-national organization such as the EU (Radaelli, 2000) altered dramatically the attraction of Europe, reformulating it as a modern empire (Zielonka, 2006). Israel is an outsider in the EU, but it has reached an agreement with it in the early 2000s (Smith, 2005). Radaelli (2000) suggested that the EU institutions have limited formal authority to mandate policy transfers from country to country, but they use institutional pressures to encourage such transfers. The reason for the effectiveness of the EU isomorphic power on non-EU countries has to do with the specific nature of the EU, as it evolved in previous decades. According to Zielonka (2006), the EU has fuzzy borders. Because it has not developed a clear national and cultural identity, it "meddles" in EU countries as well as in neighboring non-EU ones. For example, in the 21st century non-EU countries have been led to believe that they have a potential to become part of the union.

In sum, I argue that the Israeli case supports Cuban's non-rationalist explanations, but more important, it demonstrates that existing political and institutional factors are likely to push reform waves into hyperdrive when conditions of internal and external betwixt and between are present (Figure 2). This explanation helps clarify the developments in other countries worldwide, although they may be different in their level of internal or external betwixt and between and in the content of their reform hyperwaves.

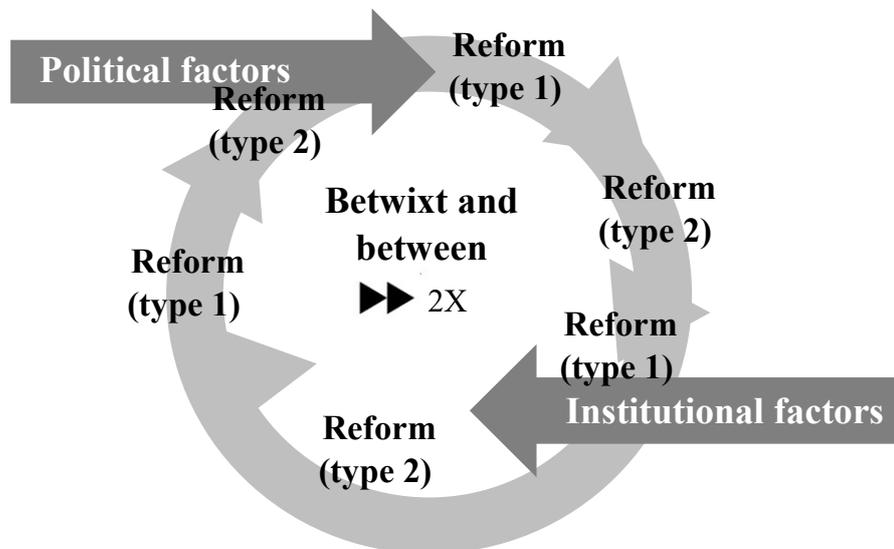


Figure 2. Model of reform hyperwaves in education.

Discussion: Reform Hyperwaves and Hyperrealistic Policymaking

The literature acknowledges that in case studies “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981, p. 59). Although the present case study focuses on the specific phenomenon of reform hyperwaves in Israel, it contributes to the understanding of how betwixt and between increases political and institutional pressures. A functional view of liminal situations can frame them as phases on the path to more structured forms, a view that underscores their centrality in the political dynamics (Mälksoo, 2012). Betwixt and between can offer several important contributions to international comparative works: first, it shifts attention internally from socio-political processes to structural political instability (Nir & Sharma Kafle, 2013); second, it directs attention externally to the boundaries and peripheries of global politics (Mälksoo, 2012).

The analysis suggests that internal political instability enhances structural opportunities for reform. This phenomenon can be better understood based on Howlett’s (1998) work. Building on Kingdon’s streams theory, Howlett distinguishes between four types of policy windows: (a) routine windows, in which procedural events offer anticipated opportunities; (b) spillover windows, in which issues are attached to an open window; (c) discretionary windows, in which individual political actors mobilize window opportunities; and (d) random windows, in which random circumstances or crises lead to irregular windows. In a stable political system, one can

find routine and spillover windows, but discretionary windows are not frequent, and random windows do not exist (Howlett, 1998). This picture is consistent with Cuban's view of the mechanisms of reform waves. By contrast, I found that in a system that is in a betwixt and between situation, the opposite occurs as discretionary and random windows are more common, leading to reform hyperwaves. In addition, the identification in the analysis that being at the semi-periphery of global politics enhances the likelihood of reform waves is consistent with earlier literature discussing the notion of a "reactive state" (Hynek, 2013). For example, because of its geopolitical location between Asia and the West, particularly the US (Wan, 2001), policymakers in Japan in the 1980s adopted an unsystematic and erratic pattern of policies and reforms (Calder, 1988). Analyzing the Japanese situation, Yasutomo (1995) suggested that this erratic reactivity is related to a relationship of hegemony-subordination, characterized as a dysfunctional adaptation of policies that is detached from clear strategic orientation. A combination of internal and external factors increases the frequency of reform waves and puts them in hyperdrive; it also amplifies their outcomes in a way that undermines systemic functionality.

Although both reform waves and hyperwaves are affected by political instability and international relations, the difference between them is in the extent to which they are affected by these factors. The present study advances our understanding of duration-dependence and about how unstable (or stable) situations enhance (or weaken) the effects of predictors as far as duration is concerned (George, 2014). The change in the number of reforms translates into a fundamental qualitative change in both policymaking and implementation, as the reforms become non-systemic, non-coherent, and strongly detached from each other. Table 1 shows a comparison between key characteristics of reform waves and hyperwaves. The table displays ideal types of reform hyperwaves and reform waves that appear to be mutually exclusive, but I suggest viewing them as forming a continuum on which countries can be positioned. Exploring policy cases using the present conceptualization can also lead to identifying hybrid forms that combine elements of the two types. Such hybrid forms can emerge, for example, in countries in transition between the two dynamics.

Table 1. *Comparison Between Characteristics of Reform Waves and Hyperwaves*

Level	Characteristic	Reform waves	Reform hyperwaves
<i>Top level politicians and appointed officials</i>	Problem formulation ^a	There is a search for agreement about problem definition	There is no search for agreement about problem definition
	Program refinement ^b	Fully locally developing, or partially locally developing by borrowing specific ideas from other contexts	Quick fix by borrowing complete programs
	Testability of program ^a	Potential solutions are first tested in a pilot	Potential solutions are adopted without adequate pretest
	Success logic ^c	Success in policy process and/or policy programs	Success in policy politics
<i>Bottom level educators</i>	Operative goals and practices ^{d, e}	Compatible priorities	Irreconcilable priorities
	Working conditions ^{d, f}	Episodic workload and time for adaptation	Prolonged workload and lack of time for adaptation
	Scale of implementation ^g	More likely to affect depth by changing teachers' values, and foster teachers' ownership of reform	Less likely to affect depth by changing teachers' values, and foster teachers' ownership of reform

Note. For elaboration on each one of these characteristics, see ^aRittel & Webber, 1973; ^bPhillips & Ochs, 2003; ^cMcConnell, 2010; ^dBall et al., 2012; ^eCoburn, 2005; ^fCollinson, & Fedoruk Cook, 2001; ^gCoburn, 2003

Historical exploration of extreme manifestations of reform waves raises follow-up questions about the possible effects on the policymakers and on the public caught in these hyperwaves. Below I offer some preliminary explanations of the implications of reform hyperwaves, based on the literature and on secondary analysis of survey data. Cunha and Tsoukas's (2015) work on "vicious circles of reform" suggests that this dynamic creates a sense of lack of clear purpose in the public

system, which produces externalities with negative spiraling effects on the ability of the system to operate. The researchers have argued that as the public trust decreases because of past failed reforms, so does the politicians' ability to initiate new reforms. Moreover, new reform initiatives lose credibility as they become nothing more than a mantra, without adequate material realization (Cunha & Tsoukas, 2015). The psychological literature suggests that when individuals view politicians as powerless or as not trustworthy, they sense increasing alienation and cynicism toward the political system (Balmas, 2014). These effects are likely to manifest not only with regard to the specific political system but also to the satisfaction of the public with the public system. Following the works of David Berliner on the perceived crisis in public education (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Berliner & Glass, 2014), I view satisfaction with public education as linked with reform attempts. As all public services often suffer from similar problems, such as inflationary demands, that are liable to generate public disappointment (Wolf, 1987), comparison with other public systems helps partly control these effects and assists in better identifying the effects of hyperwaves on the public education system. Returning to the Israeli case, one can see in Figure 3 how in the time period analyzed in this paper public satisfaction with the public education system declined. The decline may be interpreted as related to the emergence of the phenomenon of hyperwaves (2001-2009). The trend lines in the graph represent quotients calculated by dividing the satisfaction scores with the public education system (which exhibited a dynamic of reform hyperwaves) by the satisfaction scores with other public systems, such as healthcare and welfare (which did not exhibit reform hyperwave dynamic).

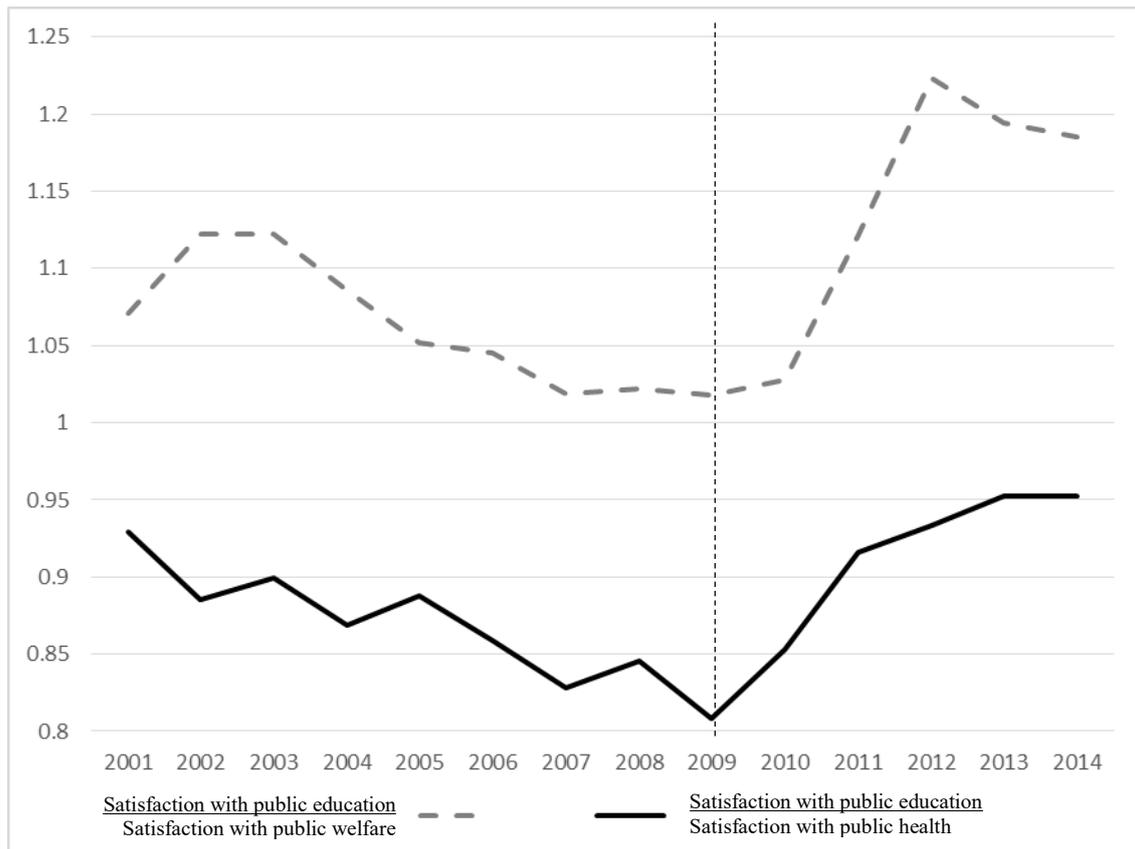


Figure 3. Comparison of Israeli public education system with other Israeli public systems (i.e., healthcare and welfare) that did not exhibit a reform hyperwave dynamic (2001-2014). Quotients were calculated by dividing satisfaction scores with the public education system (which exhibited a reform hyperwaves dynamic) by satisfaction scores with other public systems (i.e., healthcare and welfare, which did not exhibit a reform hyperwaves dynamic). Data derived from Vigoda-Gadot and Mizrahi's (2014) survey of attitudes toward public service.

The decline appears to be only a temporary effect, and in time public satisfaction with the public education system rebounded and stabilized. One possible explanation of the rebound is provided by works in cultural philosophy dealing with the concept of *hyperreality* (Baudrillard, 1981). Hyperreality describes "simulacra of reality (i.e., multiplying copies of no original) or a simulation of reality. In other words, hyperreality floats away from the life-world in a realm of the free play of signifiers and signs" (Fox & Miller, 2005, pp. 486-487). Following Baudrillard's (1981) phases of representation, hyperrealistic policymaking as a product of reform hyperwaves is the result of a multi-stage process, in which (a) the reform discourse reflects actual implementation; (b) the reform discourse is used to mask

implementation; (c) implementation is becoming absent; and (d) the reform discourse is disjointed from any implementation (a pure simulacrum). For hyperreality to become part of public discourse, several contributing media-related processes must also occur (Fox & Miller, 2005): (a) proliferation of news sources; (b) a fusion of news and entertainment; and (c) high political marketing of politicians and reforms. Cuban (1990) recognized the effect of the media on the frequency of reform waves: "The alternating waves of optimism-pessimism used to span 5 to 10 or more years; however, with the spread of instant media the entire pattern [...] may take a few years or even less" (p. 9). The minimal reservation in his work about the limited effect of media seems logical when taking into account that the work was written in 1990, and that much has changed since then in the reciprocal links between politics and the old and new media. In the Israeli context, earlier research and news coverage reports demonstrate that these elements are becoming part of the Israeli dynamic since the late 2000s. Works have documented the rise of the Internet platforms as a new key media arena for information and discourse about educational policy in Israel (Berkovich, 2011). Other works found that both Israeli politics and media are undergoing an intensifying process of political personalization in which a greater focus is directed at politicians and reduced focus at political parties (Rahat & Sheaffer, 2007). News reports suggest that Israeli ministers of education invest increasing funds in media campaigns aimed at promoting a positive image of reforms (Zemer, 2009, January 9; B.Z., 2014, August 13), and have even attempted to establish new professional PR department in the ministry (Kasthi & Scope, 2014, October 2). The educational literature suggests that policies can be designed for symbolic purposes (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), and the public policy literature acknowledges that ambiguity and conflict of a specific policy promote symbolic implementation (Matland, 1995). It is therefore conceivable that reform hyperwaves will produce a hyperrealistic policy dynamic in which symbols substitute actual implementation.

The aim of the present article was to expand Cuban's (1990) theory of reform waves based on an Israeli case study. In general, Cuban's theory appears valid and relevant to educational policy making in the 21st century. The present study demonstrates the need to expand it by including spanning conditions such as *betwixt* and *between*, which plays a key role in determining the temporal frequency of reform waves and in shaping of reform hyperwaves and of a hyperrealistic policymaking

dynamic. Although in all countries political instability and international relations contribute to intense reform waves, the present case study focused on investigating an extreme case. The insights gained from irregular cases help us better understand the comparatively more ordinary ones (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). As far as the transferability (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the insights of the work to other national contexts is concerned, it is important to remember that institutions and political order are not stable (Buthe, 2002; Fukuyama, 2014). The concept of reform hyperwaves and their characteristics discussed in this work can be used to investigate other national contexts that are changing and moving toward betwixt and between situations.

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