

Something old, something new, something borrowed: philanthropy, business and the changing roles of government in global education policy networks

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the role of governments in contemporary networked political frameworks. Such networks constitute policy communities, usually based upon shared conceptions of social problems and their solutions. By enabling social, political and economic connections at local, regional, national and international levels, the network becomes a key policy player as well as a policy technology in different spaces. More specifically, the paper is organised around three initially identified “policy frameworks” in the field of education policy. Each one of them is based on a ‘network-case’, that is an assemblage of organisations and programmes which activate new ‘methods’ of policy and financial exchange (e.g. venture philanthropy and venture capital, social enterprise and microfinance, and social capitalism). In the first framework, governments represent the main driver for political change in legislating a landscape that creates the conditions for networks to develop around different aspects within the public sphere (e.g. organisation, co-funding, delivery, etc.). This novel model of governance based on the concept of “governing through networks”, as Morgan-Trimmer (2010) calls it, offers new techniques and technologies of governing to governments, in the form of what Jessop calls meta-governance and meta-heterarchy, that is ‘the organisation of the conditions of self-organisation by redefining the framework for heterarchy or reflexive organisation’ (Jessop, 2002, p. 241). The second policy framework focuses on the activities of an existing network in order to engage with existing political configurations as a “political actor” in its own right. It relates to what could be called “governing with/alongside networks”. The key point here is to acknowledge the changes and influence that external networks might be exerting over existing policy formations and programmes. The third policy framework focuses on instances where the network operates directly as a “state-maker”. It could be understood as “governing within networks”, stressing the fact that states need to operate in a political sphere that was initially created by a networked configuration within which government is one amongst many other players. This is more common in late-developing countries defined by a nascent public-service system and/or unregulated political spheres, where there is an urgent need to construct political structures, configure new roles, determine and assign responsibilities, etc. Following the logic of “creative capitalism”, such foundational processes are to be initiated and shared by different actors, which will interact in networked ways creating agreements but also through conflicting negotiation processes.

**Keywords:** network governance, philanthropy, edu-businesses, creative capitalism

## Introduction

Since Bill Gates' speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos back in 2008, there have been a myriad of academic papers, newspaper articles, social media entries, open letters from professional bodies, and even parliamentary debates and political programmes, celebrating and developing further the ideas expressed by the then third richest man in the world. As already analysed in previous papers (Ball & Olmedo, 2012; Olmedo, 2013, 2016), creative capitalism has generated what could be understood as an 'epistemic community' (Adler & Haas, 1992). Just to reiterate once more, Gates' creative capitalism is based on the believe that:

The genius of capitalism lies in its ability to make self-interest serve the wider interest. (...) But to harness this power so it benefits everyone, we need to refine the system. (...) Such system would have a twin mission: making profits and also improving lives for those who don't fully benefit from market forces. To make the system sustainable, we need to use profit incentives whenever you can. (...) The challenge is to design a system where market incentives, including profits and recognition, drive the change. (...) I like to call this new system creative capitalism – an approach where governments, businesses, and nonprofits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world's inequities.<sup>1</sup>

Within such epistemic communities, also identified as 'communities of practice' in the sociological literature (see Callon & Latour, 1981) or 'knowledge networks' in management studies (Uzzi, 1996), models and ideas circulate that facilitate the creation of new policy discourses and technologies, which transform existing structures and procedures of controlling societies. Nevertheless, such communities 'are not in the business of controlling societies; what they control are international problems. Their approach is instrumental, and their life is limited to the time and space defined by the problem and its solutions. Epistemic communities are neither philosophers, nor kings, nor philosopherkings' (Adler & Haas, 1992, p. 371). Therefore, it would be a mistake to infer causality while claiming that the set of specific outcomes and results of processes of policy enactment linked to such ideas are a direct consequence of the operations of one specific epistemic community. There are a number of historically and geographically situated contingencies, external and internal constrains, public and private interests, political and economic pressures, etc., that are in operation and that introduce a level of uncertainty, specificity, and complexity to such policy process.

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<sup>1</sup> The full speech can be found at: <https://news.microsoft.com/speeches/bill-gates-world-economic-forum-2008/>

As Glaeser (2010, p. 48) suggests, the case for creative capitalism is based not only on the failure of markets, as they seem to have contributed to the ever increasing levels of social inequality, but on the ‘the failure of government’ which, in his opinion, ‘have failed dismally’ in their responsibilities to public health care and education. Gates’ ideas are certainly not new. Since the 1980s, a series of researchers in the fields of political science (Rhodes, 1988; Rhodes & Marsh, 1992) and sociology of organisations (Powell, 1990; Wellman, 1988) have studied the development of networks as a response to the inadequacy of markets and hierarchies in order to explain contemporary economies and political configurations, or, at least, they have shown how both, markets and hierarchies, are not formed by atomistic players operating in isolation but are rather formed by and involved in a matrix of relationships within and across sectors. Since then, the interest on policy networks has risen exponentially both within and across different disciplines. Yet, as Börzel (1997, p. 1) synthesises, ‘neither is there a common understanding of what a policy network actually is, nor has it been agreed upon whether policy networks constitute a mere metaphor, an analytical tool or a proper theory’.

At a very general level, policy networks could be defined as ‘webs of relatively stable and ongoing relationships which mobilise and pool dispersed resources so that collective (or parallel) action can be orchestrated toward the solution of a common policy’ (Kenis & Schneider, 1991, p. 36). Such definition, nevertheless, does not solve the quandaries over the nature, use and explanatory power of policy networks. Rhodes began his analysis on the configuration and functioning of the British government with the aim of establishing ‘the validity of *networks* of organisations as the most revealing unit of analysis’ (1988, p. 4, stress on original); whereas, in contrast, Mayntz suggests that ‘the notion of “policy networks” does not so much represent a new analytical *perspective* but rather signals a real change in the structure of the polity’ (1993, p. 5). According to the latter, policy networks should be understood as a new form of governance that implies not only structural changes and the creation of new institutions and organisations, but also the transformation of the nature and roles of existing policy actors, and the creation of new methods of doing policy.

The approach in this paper concurs with Dickens and his colleagues’ exercise which aims to reconcile both epistemological positions. They propose a ‘relational view of networks as a *methodology*’ where ‘networks are neither purely organizational forms nor structures’. According to them, ‘networks are essentially *relational processes*, which, when realised empirically within distinct time- and space-specific contexts, produce observable patterns in the global economy’ (Dicken et al., 2001, p. 91, stress on original). In what follows, I will try to show how such observable patterns and structural changes can be found not only at the macro-level, but also modify the common, everyday practices and forms of organisation of policy actors “on the ground”. I do not intend to support the existence of different territorial levels in which policy practices operate, but, on the contrary, show how such artificial division into levels (e.g. global-local, international-national-regional, macro-meso-micro, etc.) is not sufficient in order to understand the capillary organisation of power relations and structures

across 21<sup>st</sup> century society(ies). In this sense, my analysis will interrogate and extend what Sassen calls processes of ‘denationalization of sovereignty’, that is the ways in which ‘certain components of sovereignty have under current conditions been relocated to supra- and subnational institutions, both governmental and non-governmental institutions, and both old and newly formed institutions’ (Sassen, 2000, p. 373). However, as Dicken et al. suggest, ‘it is insufficient to focus exclusively on organizations and institutions in order to understand global changes. We also need to examine the *intentionality* and *power relations* among social actors in these organizations and institutions’ (2001, pp. 92-93).

Our research agenda for the past five years has focused on analyses of networks formations in different areas of education policy (see, for instance, Ball, 2012; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Olmedo, 2013). Our research efforts have aimed to face the challenges highlighted by Börzel (1997), and developed an approach to policy network analysis that is able to offer more than just a useful toolbox in order to analyse contemporary policy-making. She points out the need to show that ‘policy networks do not only exist but are also relevant for policy processes and policy outcomes’ (1997, p. 2). Alongside, she also advocates for the need to tackle ‘the problem of the ambiguity’ of policy network analysis if we are to show how ‘policy networks can both enhance and reduce the efficiency and legitimacy of policy-making’ (idem). The main focus of such studies has been the identification of the “how”(s) of network governance, the set of individuals, institutions, organisations, businesses, etc.; the ways in which they interrelate and interact with each other; and the new “policy solutions” to educational problems that are being enacted across the globe. This entails a comparative exercise of policies in different nation-states, but also different network configurations and policy settings within and across such borders that suggest the need to redraw the traditional geographical maps that we are used to working with. Alongside, we have begun to systematise the impacts over the multiple socio, economic and political structures in and across which such networks are embedded. In this paper, I will go back to the network databases and raise a number of questions about the new roles of government in three *policy frameworks* identified *ad hoc*. Each one of them is based on a ‘network-case’, that is an assemblage of organisations and programmes which activate new ‘methods’ of policy and financial exchange (e.g. venture philanthropy and venture capital, social enterprise and microfinance, and social capitalism). The empirical evidence in each case will be indicative but not exhaustive, given the constant iteration of the processes involved and the high speed at which such changes take place.

### ***Policy framework 1: networks as policy technology***

The first framework identified in the analysis of political settings where networks operate relates to configurations where governments represent the main driver for political change in legislating a landscape that creates the conditions for networks to develop around different aspects within the public sphere (e.g. organisation, co-funding, delivery, etc.) (see Diagram 1). The network-case for this framework focuses on the re-launched Academies

programme (see Gunter, 2011) and the newly created Free Schools scheme in England (Higham, 2014).

[Insert Diagram 1 around here]

Both programmes are situated under the political umbrella of what David Cameron, the UK conservative primer minister, baptised as the 'Big Society' in his inaugural speech back in 2010<sup>2</sup>. The Big Society shares the rationale of Gate's creative capitalism. Based on a rhetoric empowerment of local communities, businesses and individuals, the Big Society implies a devolution of power from central government to local associations, charities, non-profit and for-profit social enterprises, which will be from now on the main actors of local and national policymaking and policy accountability. This new initiative is a good example of what Rose (1996: 56) defined as 'a new pluralisation of "social" technologies' based on strategies of diversification and decentralisation. In a second speech in the House of Commons a year later, David Cameron openly defended this new 'duty' of the government within an increasingly plural "networked-state":

(...) what we are talking about here is a whole stream of things that need to be done. First of all, we have got to devolve more power to local government, and beyond local government, so people can actually do more and take more power. Secondly, we have got to open up public services, make them less monolithic, say to people: if you want to start up new schools, you can; if you want to set up a co-op or a mutual within the health service, if you're part of the health service, you can (...) I don't believe that you just sort of roll back the state and the Big Society springs up miraculously. There are amazing people in our country, who are establishing great community organisations and social enterprises, but we, the government, should also be catalysing and agitating and trying to help build the Big Society.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Big Society, the role of the government is based on its ability and capacity to set up new rules for partnerships, to facilitate and steer exchanges and control the movements and transactions within the networks. The processes involved here are not entirely what Rhodes (1996) identified as 'governing without government'. On the contrary, this new mode of governance offers new techniques and technologies of governing to governments, in the form of what Jessop calls meta-governance and meta-heterarchy, that is 'the organisation of the conditions of self-organisation by redefining the framework for heterarchy or reflexive organisation' (2002, p. 241). Far from a 'roll-back' (Peck & Tickell, 2002) or a total 'hollowing out' (Rhodes, 1994) of the state, this new model implies a "roll-out" of government, based on the creation of new structures and technologies of governance that would redefine its roles and responsibilities but, at the same time, would resituate it strategically both in normative and institutional terms.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/big-society-speech>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-big-society>

According to this new fashion, the model of funding and provision of education at primary and secondary levels under the Academies and Free Schools programmes in England moves away from state-centred forms of co-ordination while not developing a purely market-based model. What is of interest to us here is the fact that it is the government who takes the initiative and introduces new forms of understanding and delivering public policy, using the network as a policy technology (see Ball, 2007) to do it. Following the European tradition, here the network is understood as a new form of governance based on what Morgan-Trimmer (2010) calls ‘governing through networks’. In fact, the resulting picture replaces them with more flexible structures (heterarchies) where relationships, responsibilities and processes of decision-making are shared at different instances by a heterogeneous group of old and new actors with different backgrounds, profiles and interests (Jessop, 1998). Far from simply implying new recycled legislative plans, this programme is facilitating the creation of new forms of hybrid and interconnected ensembles through which philanthropic institutions, non-profit venture funds and businesses join forces to compete with traditional public and private education providers (Hatcher, 2011). As of August 2015, the DfE recognised 4762 Academies and Free Schools<sup>4</sup>, which are sponsored by 759 organisations<sup>5</sup>. Some of them are single schools but, during the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of chains of schools (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top-15 Academy sponsors (in terms of number of schools)

Academies Enterprise Trust (AET)	67
School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA)	43
Oasis Community Learning	42
Kemnal Academy Trust, The (TKAT)	41
REAch2	40
United Learning	40
Plymouth CAST	35
ARK Schools	34
David Ross Education Trust (DRET)	33
Ormiston Academies Trust	29
Harris Federation	28
Archdiocese of Birmingham	25
Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust	25
E-ACT	23
Askel Veur - Diocese of Truro	22

Source: DfE (updated Sept 2015<sup>6</sup>)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development#history>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-sponsor-contact-list>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-academies-and-academy-projects-in-development#history>

Following a fractal fashion, these chains of schools are the result of networks themselves. For instance, Ark Schools runs a chain of 34 academies in England<sup>7</sup> (plus 3 more that are in development<sup>8</sup>). On top of the funding received by the Department for Education (DfE), the *charitable company*<sup>9</sup> rests on the support of a dense network of individuals, public institutions, other philanthropic organisations and private businesses (see Network 1). ARK does not only run schools but are also involved in a number of other enterprises both in the UK and abroad (see Olmedo, 2013, 2016).

[Insert Network 1 around here]

The level of complexity in terms of managing such a diverse and expanding network of school providers (and their sub-networks) implies a change in the rationale of governmental practices. In fact, the focus of heterarchical governance is not based on the control of every single step of the delivery process but to operate over the context and conditions in which these systems function. The aim is to strategically influence others' agendas and internal processes of decision making, while avoiding the need to become directly involved in their "raw operations". This is what Rose and Miller (1992) identified as processes of 'governing at a distance', which encompass attempts of continuous dialogue and the creation of alliances between political and other actors from different fields. The role of government, therefore, moves towards what could be understood as 'the monitoring state', as it 'declines to offer solutions to particular problems but defines those problems, or "societal challenges", for which solutions must be sought' (Hodgson, 2012, p. 539). This implies, on the one hand, a focus on creating the conditions for new school providers to enter the system and, then, facilitating and overseeing such relationships within the network. As Besussi (2006) suggests, the main concern at this stage is not a lack of control on the side of government but a lack of interest of uncooperative providers. To solve that potential problem, the English government granted a contract to a charitable organisation, the New Schools Network, whose stated aim is 'to improve the quality of education – particularly for the most deprived – by increasing the number of independent, innovative schools within the state sector'<sup>10</sup>. The charity was founded in 2009 by Rachel Wolf<sup>11</sup>, a former advisor to Michael Gove (then the Secretary of State for Education), who started campaigning to expand the academies/free schools

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<sup>7</sup> <http://arkonline.org/our-schools>

<sup>8</sup> <http://arkonline.org/our-uk-schools/schools-development>

<sup>9</sup> ARK is currently registered as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in the UK. In essence, such *charitable companies* are entitled to own property and generate profit, while still remaining liable for their own debts (though this applies to the charity and not its directors, who in this case should be also the trustees, and its members). Such economic surplus, generated from the provision of the services that they provide, should be "reinvested" within their own activities, however this does not exclude the alternative possibility of using their economic assets, at their own discretion, in order to trade and purchase certain services and goods with other public and private providers.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/about-us>

<sup>11</sup> Ms Wolf left the charity in 2013 and started working for Amplify, an education technology company based in the US. She has recently come back to the UK in 2015 to work for the Department for Education under the current conservative government.

programme after her experience in New York, where she had studied the operations of a number of charter schools.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the focus here is on the network and the range of relationships themselves, while individual players might not be the most important factor. It could be argued that even though single providers can be “replaced”, there is a need to keep the network environment and connections alive. There are a number of situations that exemplify this new facet of government. In an interview to the TES back in 2011<sup>12</sup>, Sir Bruce Liddington, then director general of the E-ACT multi-academy trust and former schools commissioner at the DfE, stated that the expectations for the group was to expand from 11 to 250 schools by 2016. However, the company was already involved in a number of polemics. In 2013 and 2014, a series of investigations by the Education Funding Agency produced negative reports and raised important concerns about the lack of clarity, weak internal financial control systems and control over expenses for trustees, further ‘extravagant expenses’ and irregularities in the use of financial assets<sup>13</sup> by the multi-academy chain. Later, in 2014, E-ACT was running 34 state-funded schools when, following a series of Ofsted inspections<sup>14</sup> to 16 of them, the inspectors concluded that:

- eleven academies were failing to provide a ‘good’ education; including five that were judged to require ‘special measures’
- ten academies had not improved since their previous inspection (either as an academy or as the predecessor school). Of these, six academies had declined in terms of their Ofsted grade (two had been sponsored by E-ACT for four years or more)
- four academies were judged to be ‘good’ and one was judged ‘outstanding’.<sup>15</sup>

As a result, E-ACT then decided to relinquish 10 of their academies and hand them back to the DfE. The reaction from the government was swift and Michael Gove, then Secretary for Education, instead of converting the failing schools back into local-comprehensive schools under the control of their local authorities, commenced a search for new sponsors within the academies framework.

The role of the government here focussed on avoiding the collapse of the network, what Schrank and Whitford (2011) identify as ‘network failure’. Such

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.tes.com/article.aspx?storycode=6073399>

<sup>13</sup> Sir Liddington was forced to resign after the controversy generated by the first of those reports and, also, the on-going pressures on him since E-ACT public accounts revealed that the general-director received a salary of £280,816 in 2010/11, plus £18,303 for his pension and £16,707 in expenses.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to remember at this point that the inspectorate evaluates individual schools but not the groups and chains behind them.

<sup>15</sup> The results of the inspections to E-ACT schools can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/279545/Financial\\_management\\_and\\_governance\\_review\\_E-ACT.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279545/Financial_management_and_governance_review_E-ACT.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/results-of-e-act-academy-inspections-published>

failure could be materialised, as suggested earlier, in the form of lack of interest on the side of the provision, but also through the creation of processes of monopolisation of the network by a small number of providers, by negligent practices, and/or the development of dynamics of unfair competition within the networks. All those could potentially translate into deep power imbalances that would risk the government's role as network leader and its steering capacity given the size and reach of over-grown providers, or, consequently, result in a lack of trust dynamics that could spoil the relationships amongst the multiple providers within the network and/or the members of the broader policy community (see Wright, 1988) around the Academies and Free Schools programmes.

### **Policy framework 2: *network as a policy actor***

The second policy framework is based on the activities of existing networks that engage with existing political configurations as a “political actors” in their own right (see Diagram 2). The network-case in this framework focuses on the activities of the Teach For All (TfA) Network in Europe. In fact, the nature and configuration of the European Union itself constitute a very favourable breeding ground for the operation of such networked enterprises. As Börzel suggests in her analysis of European governance, ‘the European Union then is conceptualised as a multi-level system of governance, where private and public actors of the supranational, national and subnational level interact within highly complex networks to produce policy outcomes’ (Börzel, 1997, p. 11).

[Insert Diagram 2 around here]

TfA is a network of social enterprises that is reshaping the definition of education and what it means to be a teacher through the development of a new model of teacher training. TFA operates at different scales and rhythms across the world and ‘incorporates multiple scales of economic (along with political, cultural and social) relations’ (Dicken et al., 2001, p. 90). The TFA network currently spreads over 37 countries, with a significant presence within the European Higher Education Space (EHES) (13 of its members are located within the EU). Even though TFA members are independent and encouraged to embed themselves sensitively within their own local and national contexts, it is precisely their networked configuration that helps them learn and benefit from their connections with each other. A discursive, cultural and epistemological suture holds these different enterprises together, enabling TFA to describe itself as a ‘global movement’ of educational reform and ‘The Global Network for Expanding Educational Opportunity’<sup>16</sup>. A closer look at the funding scheme of TfA and each one of the individual cases shows similarities with the previous example. A number of inter/national banks (examples), international consultancy firms (examples), and retail companies (examples) are deeply embedded throughout the network (see Network 2).

[Insert Network 2 around here]

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<sup>16</sup> <http://teachforall.org/en>

As analysed in previous work (see Bailey, 2015; Olmedo et al., 2013), the private companies involved in the programme benefit directly or indirectly in multiple ways. For instance, the German subsidiary, *Teach First Deutschland*, runs the so-called ‘Teach First – join later’ scheme. The following extract from their website exemplifies the motivations for McKinsey & Co. in this case to partner with the charitable company:

### **McKinsey & Company**

In addition to your application at Teach First Deutschland, you are applying at McKinsey & Company for the position of Junior Fellow, Fellow or Associate under [bewerbung.mckinsey.de](http://bewerbung.mckinsey.de). There, under ‘Fill in application’ you choose the option ‘teach-first – join later’. Subsequently, both application procedures at Teach First Germany and McKinsey & Company will run parallel. If you are successful in both of them, you will receive an offer to start on condition that you first successfully complete the two year fellowship at Teach First Germany.<sup>17</sup>

This type of “deferred entry” scheme constitutes a source of economic profit for the private companies involved. Through them, such corporate partners guarantee a high level of training and capacitation as well as valuable skills and qualifications prior to employment. As suggested before, ‘there is a *capitalisation on* and a *commodification of* the Teach For All participant here. They have an attributed *commercial value* (in human capital) which is not only “proven” but apparently ‘enhanced’ through the completion of the programme’ (Olmedo et al., 2013, p. 505).

A strong financial and political support from national governments can be observed. In England, for instance, Teach First is funded mainly by the UK government. According to the charitable enterprise’s 2013-14 Trustees Annual Report and Accounts<sup>18</sup>, compared to the £6.6m received from “*Corporate, trusts and other contributions*” plus “*Donations in kind*”, Teach First receives £12.4m from “*Government grants*” (which covers the yearly grant paid by the government per trainee), £22.9m from their “*Initial Teacher Training Contract*” (a contract that the charity’s subsidiary, *Teach First Initial Teacher Development*, has secured with the National College for Teaching and Leadership, an UK government’s executive agency), and £8.1m from “*Fees paid by schools*”. In 2014, Teach First recruited 1,426 trainees in addition to the 1,066 that continued from the previous year. However, what is of interest for the aim of this paper is not only the fact that the network is supporting governments by training teachers on their behalf, but also the fact that the ideas and solutions offered by the network are putting into question and transforming existing political schemes and programmes in the public realm. As an example, the Teach First model served as the basis for the new initial teacher-training scheme in England (*Schools Direct*)

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.teachfirst.de/teachfirstjoinlater>

<sup>18</sup> This is the latest available on their website to date. Available at: <http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/press/pdf/2013-14%20Trustees%27%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts%20-%20final%20signed%20version%20GT%20for%20CC.pdf>

launched by the conservative government in 2012<sup>19</sup>. Such movement of ideas does not happen serendipitously or in a vacuum (see Network 3). On the contrary, it is the effect of the prolonged efforts and influences exerted within and across policy networks (see, for instance, Ball, 2007; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Olmedo, 2012). In our case, for instance, Lord Andrew Adonis is one of Teach First's founding ambassadors. Member of the Labour Party from 1995 until 2015, he was Secretary of State for Transport, Minister for Schools, Head of the No.10 Policy Unit, and senior No. 10 adviser on education, public services and constitutional reform. While in government, he was the political architect of the initial Academies programme (see Policy Framework 1) amongst other reforms of key public services. More recently, Sam Freeman, a former senior policy adviser to Michael Gove when the latter was UK Secretary of State for Education, joined Teach First in 2013 as Director of Research, Evaluation and Impact and is currently the Executive Director of Programmes at Teach First. He also sits on the board of Floreat Education, an Academy sponsor that runs 5 schools in London (once again, it is worth noting the overlaps with Policy Framework 1). The list of connections with government bodies, private companies and other philanthropic organisations is gargantuan across Teach First's board of trustees, executive and senior leadership teams, ambassadors, etc.

[Insert Network 3 around here]

The model nurtured by the TfA network implies an alternative to “traditional” forms of teacher training across Europe and, also, puts pressure on national governments who are compelled to modify existing regulation to order to make room and accommodate the new initiative. This new mode of governance relates to what could be called “governing with/alongside networks”. Here, unlike the previous case, the network is not the effect of governmental action but an external player that will collaborate and/or compete with traditional policy actors. By doing so, the network is exerting changes over the roles of such actors (government departments, political parties, unions, universities, schools, etc.) who are forced to develop strategies and policy technologies in order to incorporate and/or resist the influence exerted by such external networked policy formations.

### **Policy framework 3: *network as state-maker***

Finally, the third policy framework identified focuses on instances where network configurations operate directly as a ‘state-maker’. This is more common, though not exclusively, in late-developing countries defined by a nascent public-service system and/or unregulated political spheres, where there is an urgent need to construct political structures, configure new roles, determine and assign responsibilities, etc (see Diagram 3). The network-case in this framework will focus on the development of the Ugandan Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme.

[Insert Diagram 3 around here]

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<sup>19</sup> Research interview conducted with the Head of Research at Teach First.

During the last decade, the overall growth in population in Uganda, alongside the rise in the number of students completing Primary Education (as a result of the enactment of the free Universal Primary Education programme), are generating strong difficulties for the government to attend to the increasing demands for school placements at Secondary levels. Such pressures are experienced not only in the field of education but also in other sectors of the Ugandan public services. To tackle the situation, in 2010 the government announced a new strategic framework, the National Development Plan (NDP), with a clear vision: 'a transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years'<sup>20</sup>. To do so, the government is openly committed to allowing private investment and participation to play a more significant role in the modernisation of the country. On the Foreword of the NDP document, President Museveni stated: 'I urge the private sector, civil society and academia to work together with Government and to align their development efforts towards achieving the NDP objectives and the country's Vision'<sup>21</sup>. In the same line, a review of the Ugandan NDP prepared by the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlights:

The NDP broadens the strategic focus of the authorities from 'poverty reduction' to 'structural transformation' in order to raise growth and living standards. In recent years, the authorities' policies have increasingly targeted a rise in potential growth and reduction in income poverty. Building on the achievements under the PEAP, the NDP aims at fostering skilled employment growth and a sectoral shift to higher value-added activities. It gives the government a strategic role in this process by eliminating remaining, persistent barriers to growth and promoting private sector involvement in selected priority areas. The NDP identifies four priority targets: human resources development through health, education and skills building; boosting up physical infrastructure, particularly in the energy and transportation areas; supporting science, technology and innovation; and facilitating private access to critical production inputs, particularly in agriculture.<sup>22</sup>

In the field of education, the new landscape sketched in the NDP adds to existing pressures for the country to meet the Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG). As a response, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) launched the Universal Secondary Education programme in 2007. The scheme is part of the broader Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) program and follows the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model. As Verger (2012, p. 110) suggests, PPPs are 'programmatic ideas', that is 'technical ideas that provide the interpretation of a policy problem and its causes and prescribe a precise course of policy action to solve the problem'. In short, PPPs are an "umbrella notion" that covers different contractual arrangements between the private and civil society organisations and public

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<sup>20</sup> <http://npa.ug/development-plans/ndp-201011-201415/>

<sup>21</sup> Idem.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10142.pdf>

institutions in order to provide and/or operate infrastructure and/or deliver public services (see Education International, 2009; Patrinos et al., 2009). According to its advocates, the PPPs programme will help ‘maximize the potential for expanding equitable access to schooling and for improving education outcomes, especially for marginalized groups’ (Patrinos et al., 2009, p. 9). However, critics have raised concerns and warned that, in some cases, the use of PPPs is a cover-up for form of ‘hidden privatization’, where the ‘word “partnership” is being used to render “privatization” more palatable to public opinion’ (Education International, 2009, p. 147).

The PPP solution that conforms the basis for the Ugandan USE programme is different from other more familiar schemes (Brans, 2011). In this case, the government pays a fixed per-capita fee directly to private secondary schools that are situated in sub-counties that are not served by government-aided or public schools. To be eligible, private schools must meet a set of criteria and quality benchmarks: (i) being registered with the MoES, (ii) have adequate infrastructure, (iii) show demonstrated support from locally elected officials and education officials, (iv) institute a board of governors with government and parental membership and (v) have sufficient certified teaching staff (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2015, p. 4). However, the specific terms of each contract are included in a Memorandum of Understanding that is signed between the government and the individual private school operator. As a result, as Brans’ research shows, in the Ugandan case ‘the policy environments where the PPPs are discussed are characterized by non-transparency, lack of dissension and decreasing space for civil society engagement’ (2011, p. 48).

The World Bank is one of the main promoters of the PPP programme in Uganda, both economically and in terms of political advocacy and consultancy (see Network 4). In fact, since the launch of the UPPET programme, the WB has contributed 20 per cent of the programme’s budget (\$150 million) through an Adjustable Program Loan [APL] to be implemented in three phases over a 10-year period. Alongside, external support is also provided by other development partners, which includes the African Development Bank (AfDB), German Technical Assistance Agency (GTZ), the Belgian Embassy/Technical Cooperation, Embassy of Ireland, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) and the Netherlands Embassy<sup>23</sup>. The presence of political international and national organisations (through embassies, foreign affairs ministries, national development agencies, etc.) reinforces Sassen’s conclusion that suggested that ‘many governments now see their responsibilities going beyond foreign policy as traditionally conceptualized and extending into world trade, the global environment and global economic stability’ (2000, p. 383).

[Insert Network 4 around here]

In 2010, the IFC, in partnership with the AfDB, launched the Africa Schools

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/08/31/post-primary-education-program-increases-student-enrollment-in-uganda>

Uganda Program ‘to support improvements to private secondary and tertiary schools in Uganda, while helping thousands of students in the country to access high-quality education’<sup>24</sup>. The plan aims to provide support and advisory service to 500 schools across the country, helping them address financial and management issues so they can offer improved educational services. Moreover, it will also facilitate access to financial resources through local commercial banks, such as Diamond Trust Bank, DFCU, and Bank of Africa.

On the delivery side, the number of private educational providers has increased rapidly since the initial phases of the enactment of the UPPET programme. In 2008, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports created the Private Schools and Institutions department to oversee ‘the vibrant and ever expanding private investment in education’<sup>25</sup>. To date, according to the department’s website<sup>26</sup>, the number of private secondary schools (over 4000) is more than double the number of public schools in the country. The profile of the former varies dramatically in terms of their motto (confessional/secular character), organisational structure (single/chains of schools), and economic rationale (for/not-for profit). One of the biggest providers that currently operate in Uganda is PEAS (Promoting Equality in African Schools), a UK-registered charity that runs a chain of 24 secondary schools in Uganda in a not-for-profit basis. PEAS, once again, counts with a broad network of partners (see Network 3). The charity’s school model, labelled as “SmartAid Schools in Africa”, is based on the principle of ‘self-sustainability’ and each of their schools aim to become financially independent from any source of external funding from the moment in which they are opened:

PEAS UK fundraises to launch a secondary school, allowing it to open debt free. Then, a combination of subsidies from pioneering public-private partnerships (PPPs) with the Ugandan and Zambian government, boarding school fees and school farms, mean that within two years, the school itself will generate enough revenue to cover its running costs, including teacher salaries, indefinitely.<sup>27</sup>

The charitable company has offices in London (UK), Kampala (Uganda) and Ndola (Zambia) and they have been closely involved with the Ugandan government in the design and development of the PPP scheme since its inception<sup>28</sup>.

More recently, new developments on the UPPET programme, which under the influence of the WB was expanded to all private schools including for-profit ventures (see Brans, 2011), has called the attention of new players and edu-

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<sup>24</sup>

<http://ifcext.ifc.org/IFCExt/pressroom/IFCPressRoom.nsf/0/9847924459B1E31B852577AD0049C5C1?OpenDocument>

<sup>25</sup>

<http://www.education.go.ug/data/smenu/50/Private%20Schools%20and%20Institutions.html>

<sup>26</sup> Idem.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.peas.org.uk/about-us/sustainability>

<sup>28</sup> Research interview conducted with John Rendell, CEO of PEAS.

businesses. For instance, in February 2015 Bridge International Academies opened seven schools in Uganda. The company operates in a diametrically opposed fashion than PEAS. Bridge defines itself as ‘the world’s largest education innovation company’<sup>29</sup>. They operate in a for-profit basis and their rationale is clear:

We are data-driven and technology-enabled. Using smartphones and tablets, our “closed loop” Learning Lab enables us to monitor teacher and student performance in real time, constantly reviewing and revising to ensure that we are offering a world class education that will prepare our students for the 21st century.<sup>30</sup>

BIA opened its first school in Nairobi (Kenya) in 2009. To date, the company runs 414 schools in three different countries (Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda) and is preparing to expand in India in the near future. Amongst its main investors there are a number of individuals (e.g. Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg); venture capital firms (Khosla Ventures; NEA; NOVASTAR; PanAfrican Investment Co.); edu-businesses (Learn Capital [part of Pearson PLC]; RethinkEducation); philanthropic organisations (Omidyar Network) international organisations (IFC) and also national government agencies (UK Department for International Development [DfID]; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation [OPIC], the US government’s development finance institution).

Finally, in 2011 the Ugandan National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) hired Cambridge Education to develop the Secondary Education Curricula, Assessment and Examinations Reform (CURASSE)<sup>31</sup>. The activities to be performed by the company during the 40-month duration of the contract included: writing the curriculum; developing teaching and learning materials, examinations and assessment reforms; and creating a teacher support programme<sup>32</sup>. Cambridge Education is a ‘global education services company’<sup>33</sup>, part of the Mott MacDonald Ltd. (a global independent education, health, management and construction consultancy). The company is involved in a number of activities with partners in the UK and abroad, such as: public and private schools (including a number of English academies mentioned above in policy framework 1), local authorities, public sector agencies, governments, etc.

The examples shown above are proof of the *causal power* of network relationships. This final policy framework case stresses the fact that states, or, at least, sections within them, are formed in a political landscape that takes the shape of networked configurations within which the government is one amongst many other players. This mode of governance could be understood as “governing within networks”. Following the logic of ‘creative capitalism’, such foundational

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com/company/about/>

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.ncdc.go.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=185:curasse-phase-1-inception-report&catid=109&Itemid=544](http://www.ncdc.go.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=185:curasse-phase-1-inception-report&catid=109&Itemid=544)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.camb-ed.com/Experience/Casestudies/CurriculumAssessmentandExaminationReform.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.camb-ed.co.uk/Aboutus.aspx>

processes are designed and shared by different actors, which will interact in a networked ways creating agreements but also through conflicting negotiation processes. This resembles what Rhodes understood as 'the differentiated polity with no single centre' (1988, p. 1). Here, the government is possibly the initiator of such processes but not necessarily the main regulator of the direction and the participants on them (see Ball, 2012).

### **So far...**

Throughout this paper, I have begun to sketch a conceptual model that aims to facilitate the analysis of what could be understood as processes of "network governance in action". As we already know, network configurations are complex and different both structural and semantically. Policy networks are considered as one kind of new global "social" (Ball & Olmedo, 2012), where new voices are given space within policy talk. By enabling global social, political and economic connections, these become key players spaces in the fields of social and education policy (Ball, 2012). They constitute policy communities, usually based upon shared conceptions of social problems and their solutions. However, far from having created a more democratic environment where horizontal relationships facilitate an environment where multiple voices are considered and different collectives are able to participate in equal conditions in policy-making processes (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007), new vertical and hierarchical relationships can be acknowledged. Power imbalance within networks is based on the control of resources (physical, political, economic, social and technological) by certain actors, and the capacity of the latter to mobilise such resources through them. In this sense, it should be noted that 'power should be conceived as a *practice* rather than a *position* within a network' (Dicken et al., 2001, p. 93)

Börzel (1997, p. 15) concludes her paper by affirming the need to not only show that policy networks *exist* but also that they are *relevant*. Having spend the last few years identifying and mapping the construction of neoliberal policy networks in multiple contexts, this paper begins to conceptualise the changing, multiple, clashing and, at times, incoherent roles that different players exert throughout them. More specifically, here I have focused on the role of governments in three initially identified "policy frameworks" (network as a policy technology; network as a policy actor; and network as a state-maker), which corresponds with three different modes of governance (governing through networks; governing with/alongside networks; governing within networks).

As Dicken and his colleagues suggest, "there exists, then, a particular constellation of power relations implicit in any understanding of the global economy" (2001, p. 90). Such power relations can only be discovered and understood (if at all possible) through the everyday practices (meetings, contracts, agreements, statements, informal conversations, email exchanges, etc.) and spaces (meeting rooms and offices, corridors, conferences, airports, restaurants, etc.) in which they are realised. It is here where the tedious exercise of triangulating information in newspaper articles, pursuing every link on a

website, interrogating diaries and passports, setting up Twitter alerts and following people and companies on Facebook, just to mention only a few of the multiple tasks that are involved in reconstructing policy networks, could shed some light on the analysis of what, following Peck and Theodore (2015), could be identified as the era of 'fast policy'.

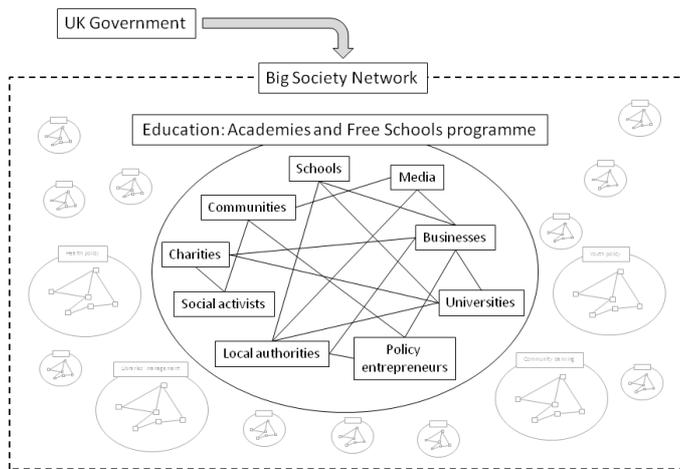
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**Diagram 1: Network as a policy technology**



**Key aspects:**

**Mode of governance:**

- Governing through networks

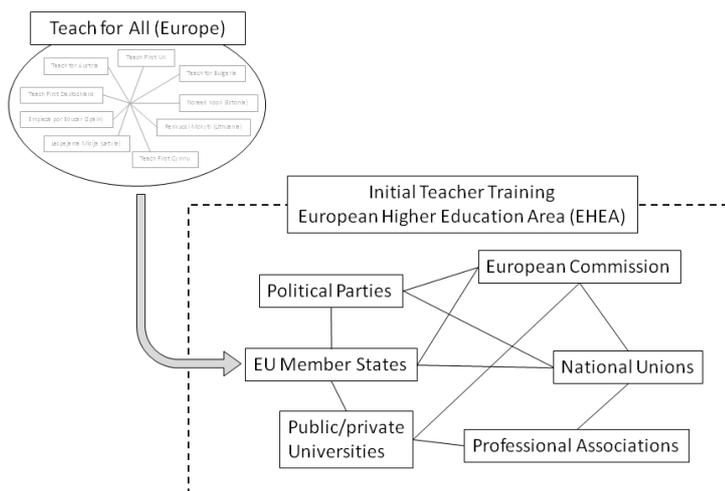
**Network case:**

- Academies and Free Schools

**Location / geographical reach:**

- England / National

**Diagram 2: Network as a policy actor**



**Key aspects:**

**Mode of governance:**

- Governing with/alongside networks

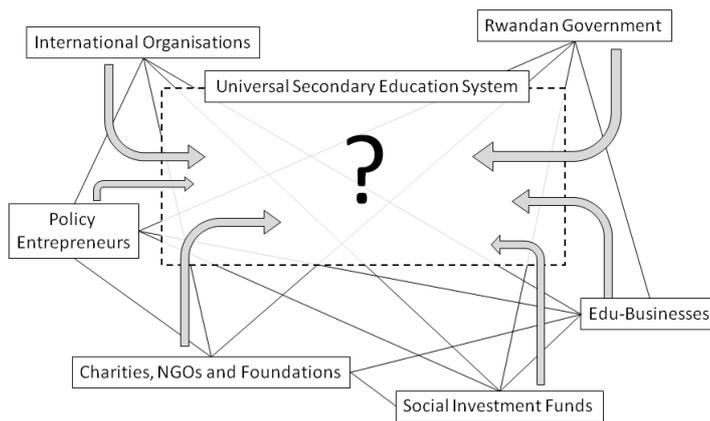
**Network case:**

- Teach for All Network / European Higher Education Space

**Location / geographical reach:**

- European Union / International
- England, Germany, Spain / National

**Diagram 3: Network as a state-maker**



**Key aspects:**

***Mode of governance:***

- Governing within networks

***Network case:***

- Public Private Partnership / Social Impact Bond

***Location / geographical reach:***

- Rwanda / National
- International players / Global