

## Book Review

***Policy Studies For Educational Leaders: An Introduction* (4th ed.). By Frances C. Fowler. Boston: Pearson Education, 2013.**

*Policy Studies For Educational Leaders: An Introduction* is written as a textbook about educational policy development at the district, state and national levels in the United States. The textbook best serves graduate students who are interested in becoming educational administrators. Professors designing graduate courses in educational policies will find the textbook provides foundational information on education policy in the United States.

The textbook consists of two parts that collectively illustrate how educational policy is made, and how it can be understood by educators working in the K-12 system. Part One of the book (five chapters) informs the reader of the origins of policy and explains policy and its related concepts that exist in numerous fields, resulting in philosophical differences pertaining to society, power and government. Dr. Fowler defines public policy as “the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem” (p. 5). Unexpectedly, she chooses to use racial segregation as a first example of policy, politics and law early in the text. She does not contextualize in the first chapter why she feels this is an essential starting point to discuss educational policy. The example comes across to the reviewer as quick reference to important race-based issues in educational policy in the United States that is not further unpacked. The first chapter also provides background knowledge needed for the remainder of the textbook. It illustrates the changing education policy environment and discusses the economic, demographic and ideological shifts that catalyze need for change. This section is followed by a discussion of the role of the educational leader in developing educational policy.

Early in Part One, the textbook focuses on power in relation to educational policy. It expands the foundational knowledge of policy writing needed before one can attempt to effect educational policy change. Dr. Fowler also presents a three-dimensional model of power that includes explicit use of power and four types of power (Force, Economic Dominance, Authority and Persuasion), mobilization of bias, and shaping of consciousness. The author also discusses the power key educational policy actors have, including educational leaders. The chapter ends with an apt articulation of the dangers of power in the educational context.

Towards the end of Part One, the author makes explicit mention of the resurgence of conservatism since the 1980s. The content challenges the reader to think of the values and ideologies that exist in their own educational contexts in relation to implementing new policies and school changes. In addition, utilitarian philosophies and Weberian traditions are discussed. The end of Part One outlines the self-interests of policy makers in relation to finance and power, and social values in terms of order and individualism.

Part Two includes seven chapters dedicated to informing the reader of policy actors, policy process, defining issues, setting agenda, obtaining funding, policy formulation and adoption, policy instruments, policy costs, policy implementation and evaluation. It is with Dr. Fowler’s discussion of each of these components that the reader learns the systematic way educational policy is effectively written. The second part of the book is very informative for educational

leaders on the practicalities of policy work at the state level and leaders' specific roles and responsibilities with policy formation.

Part Two reminds readers of ever-present ideologies, such as conservatism and liberalism, in educational and political systems, which often prevent the development of policy. These ideologies are important for readers to be aware of if they are to understand how policy functions in schools. In addition, Dr. Fowler includes a logical amount of figures to assist with sections, processes, or systems that have several interacting parts, such as the legislative process in state legislation. A detailed explanation of school budgets clearly depicts the realities of costs of educational policy change for school leaders.

The textbook ends with an updated examination of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which is one of the key Acts in modern times to influence K-12 schools in the United States. The succinct, realistic, mostly non-partisan examination of NCLB provides important explanations of the issues with the Act for current, or soon to be educational leaders in the United States who will hold the responsibility of understanding how the Act influences policy in their schools. The textbook cites research that indicates continued dissatisfaction of public education in the United States by African American and Latinos hinged on school policy that is inherently racist.

Overall, Dr. Fowler's textbook is engaging and an informative read of policy studies. The textbook serves as an additional resource in the field of educational policy by providing foundational information on what constitutes policy, how educators come to understand policy, as well as how they may begin to make new policy. In addition, the textbook outlines how educational policy has complexities different than other forms of policy. There is a balance between government, dominant social ideology, access to education and funding that one must be aware of before engaging in educational policy change. Dr. Fowler has concisely relayed these key components of educational policy well via an effective layout and fluid writing.

*Reviewed by Nadia Mallay, PhD Student, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia.*