



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

ECDE 7017

Exploring Contemporary Issues in Education 1: Policy Review and Critical Analysis Session 2: 6th October 2026

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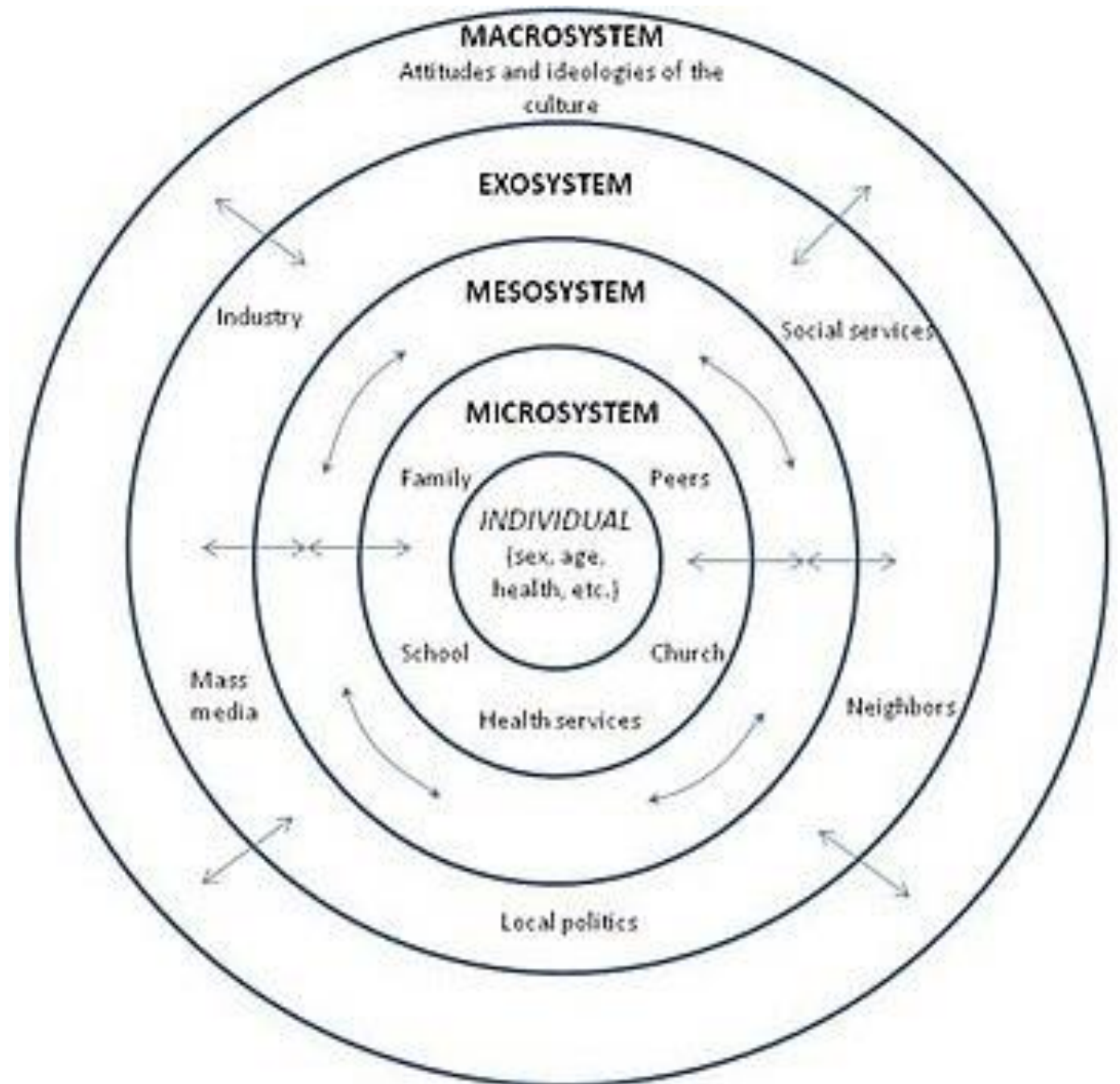
Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

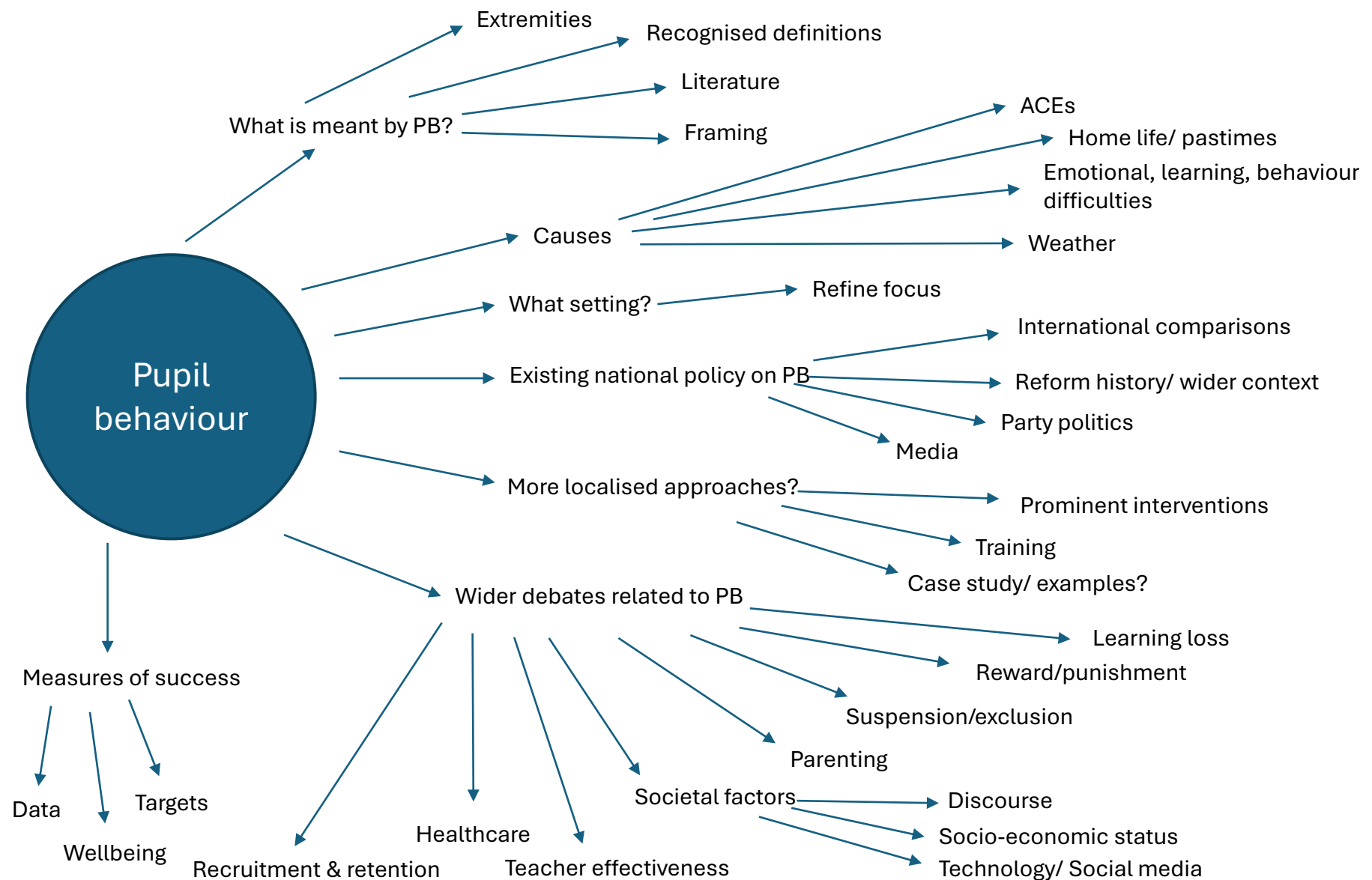
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The education ecosystem



Bronfenbrenner and an ecological system





Task:

- In small groups present how you critically engaged with an issue in education
- Listen carefully and take notes
- Be prepared to ask and answer question to further develop your thinking and criticality
- You will be asked to share key insights with the rest of the group



3-2-1!

WRITE DOWN 3 NEW OR
INTERESTING FACTS
THAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



WRITE DOWN 2 IDEAS
THAT YOU ARE GOING
TO USE MOVING
FORWARD



WRITE DOWN 1
QUESTION YOU WOULD
LIKE TO ASK/ONE THING
THAT IS MAKING YOU
CURIOUS



What do we mean by criticality?

Critical thinking...

- Critical thinking ‘examines assumptions, discerns hidden values, evaluates evidence, and assesses conclusions.’

(Petress, 2004)

- ‘Critical thinking is the art of making clear, reasoned judgements based on interpreting, understanding, applying and synthesising evidence gathered from observation, reading and experimentation.’ (Burns & Sinfield, 2016)
- ‘Critical thinking means questioning not only assumptions of others, but also questioning your own assumptions.’
(Barnet & Bedau, 2011)

Reminder - Assessment:

Assessment Component 1 – 20% (13th October 2026)

Prepare a presentation for a conference that critically evaluates a contemporary issue in education, its representation in official statements, media treatment and your understanding of its treatment in an international context (10-minute presentation).

Assessment Component 2 – 30% (2nd November 2026)

Design an academic poster outlining your detailed planning and rationale for component 3 (a written assignment reporting on a contemporary policy issue in education). Relevant documents and notes may be included to support your ideas.

Assessment Component 3 – 50% (23rd November 2026)

Prepare a policy report on a contemporary issue in education of your choosing.

assessment

One-word Ofsted grades should stay, says government



Hazel Shearing

Education correspondent

[@hazelshearing](#)

The system of one-word Ofsted judgements for schools in England has "significant benefits" and should stay, according to the government.

It said the grades, such as "outstanding" or "inadequate", gave parents an important summary of local schools.

The sister of head teacher Ruth Perry, who took her own life after her school was downgraded, said she was deeply upset by the government's response.

Where did you find the information?

What are the key messages or results/findings?

How has the author/speaker come to their conclusions?

Who has written/said it?

When was it written/said?

Why has it been written/said?

Ofsted single-word school ratings to be scrapped immediately

Labour announces end of high-stakes judgments, to be replaced by report cards that grade schools in four categories

- 'Landmark moment': Ruth Perry family campaign ends single-word reports



Previously, Ofsted awarded one of four headline grades to the schools it inspects: outstanding, good, requires improvement, or inadequate. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Single-word [Ofsted](#) judgments for state schools will be scrapped with immediate effect to be replaced by report cards aimed at improving standards and helping parents to better understand schools' strengths and weaknesses.

The four headline ratings currently awarded by the inspections watchdog in England - outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate - will go as part of radical changes announced on Monday by the government.

In their place, state schools inspected this year will be graded on quality of education, behaviour, personal development and leadership. Independent schools, early years settings, colleges and children's social care providers will follow.

Education unions and the teaching profession welcomed the changes to the school inspection system, first promised by [Labour](#) before the election following the suicide of the primary headteacher Ruth Perry.

Six questions to trigger critical thinking:

Where did you find the information?

*Was it presented to you? Did you search for it?
How hard did you have to look? Is your source
reputable?*

How has the author/speaker come to their
conclusions?

*Is their line of reasoning logical? What did they
do to come to their conclusions? Are they
reliable/based on evidence?*

When was it written/said?

Is it recent and relevant?

What are the key messages
or results/findings?

*What are its claims to new knowledge? What
is their point? How does it compare to your
own?*

Who has written/said it?

*Is the author speaking as an individual or on
behalf of an organisation/employer? Are they
an expert/do they have credibility? Can you
identify bias?*

Why has it been written/said?

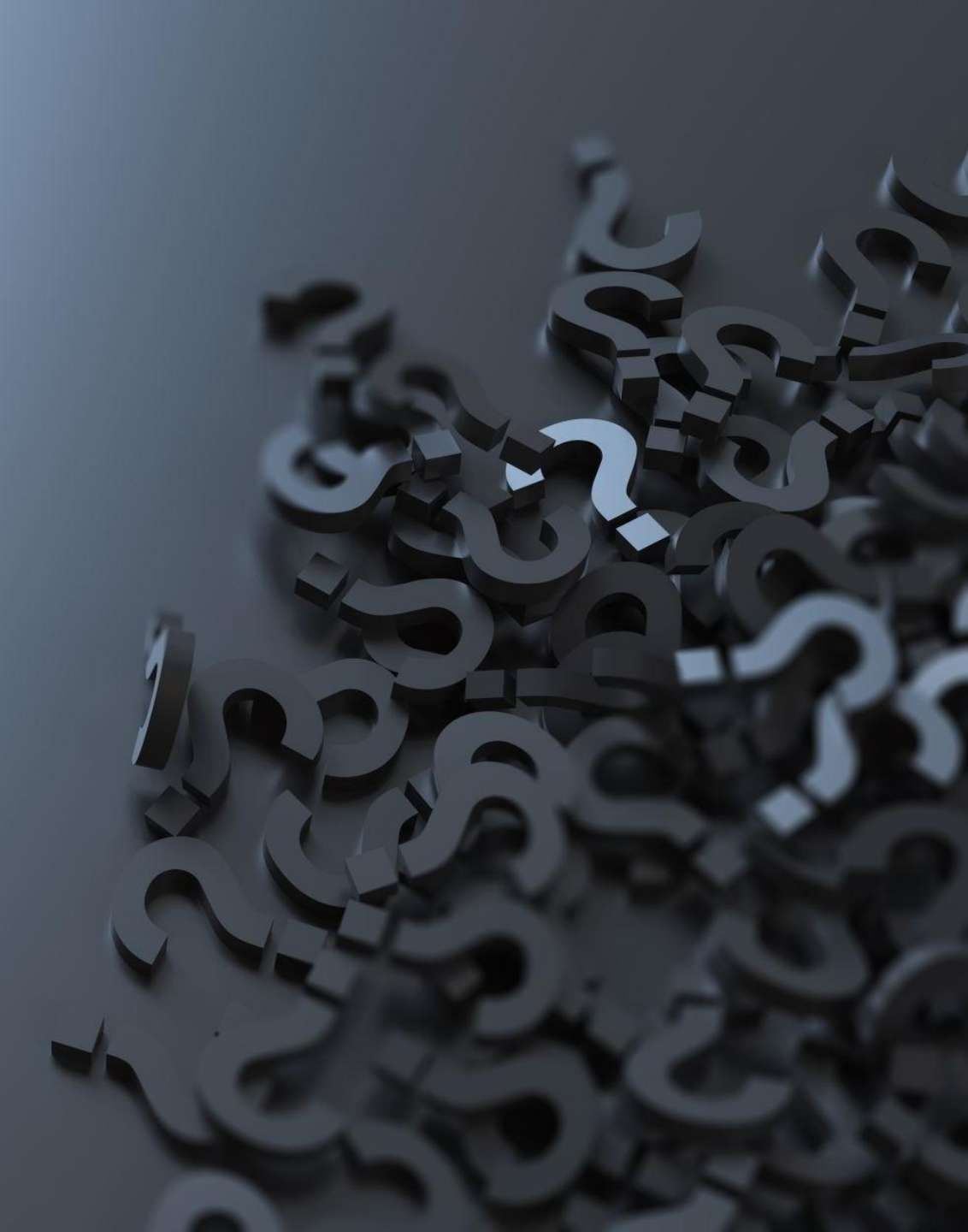
Who is it aimed at? What are its aims?

Critical thinking means...

- Being forensic in your analysis of a claim/policy/intervention
- Considering a range of views – never rely on a single source; are there alternative viewpoints?
- Careful construction of an argument, based on evidence
- Justifying your position – and providing sound rationale for the decisions you take (feel free to disagree, but must explain why)
- Spelling it out – never assume that your audience knows what you know
- You don't take anything for granted... ask questions and think about the 'bigger picture'

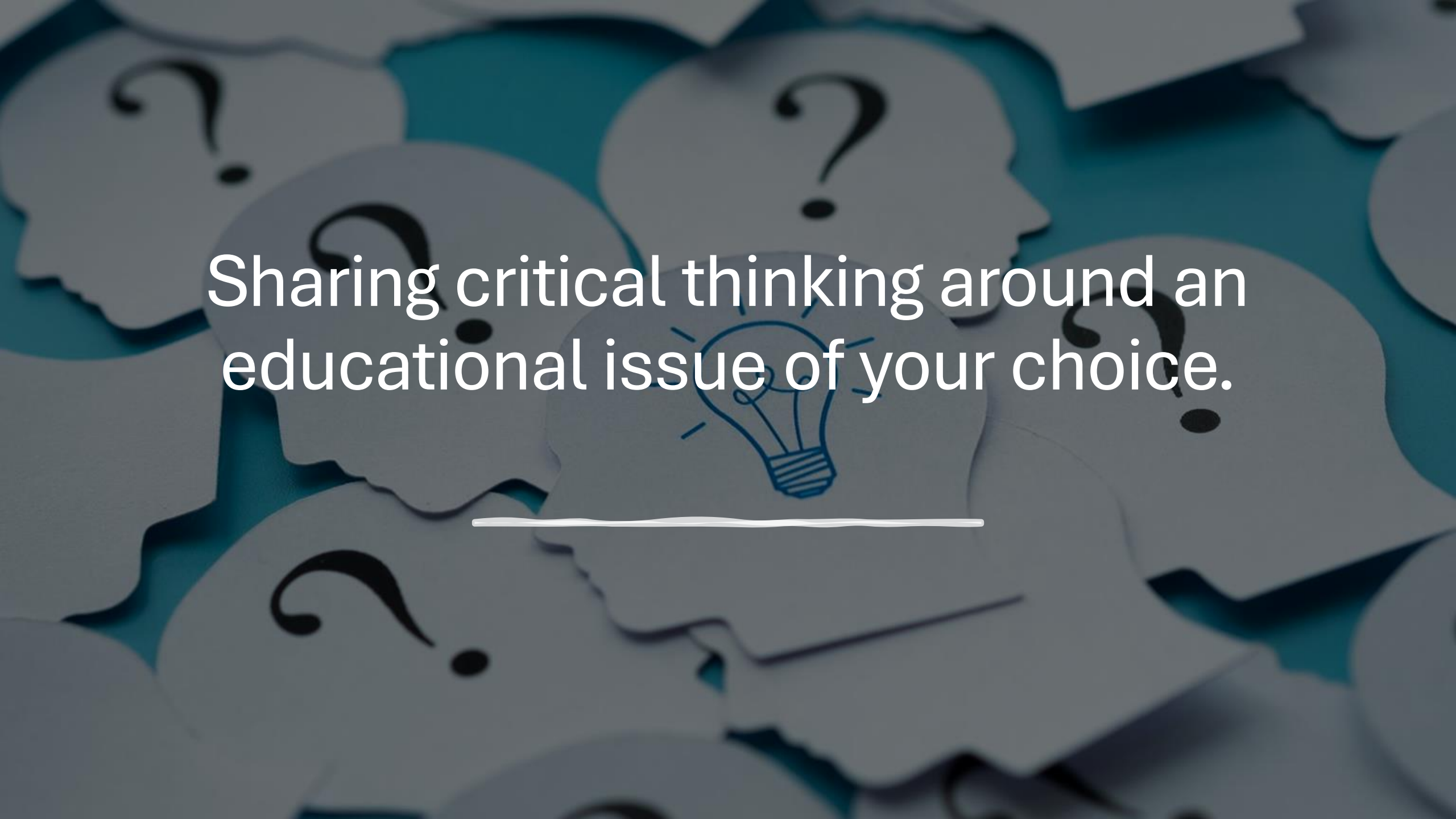
Task: consider
how your chosen
educational issue
is presented in the
media





Ask yourself:

- Are there any hidden assumptions or agendas?
- Is there a political motivation?
- Does the evidence provided support the conclusions made?
- Is the analysis fair? (subjective vs objective)
- Why was something done – and what was its significance?
- Is the timing significant?
- How does one interpretation compare to another?
- Why might authors agree/disagree?
- Do opinions change over time?
- What is the weight of evidence and how convincing is it?
- Are the sources reputable?
- What are their strengths/weaknesses?

The background features a collage of grey silhouettes of human heads in profile, some facing left and some right. Interspersed among these are several black question marks. A single blue line-art lightbulb is positioned centrally, slightly below the main text. The entire composition is set against a dark teal background with a subtle, darker teal pattern.

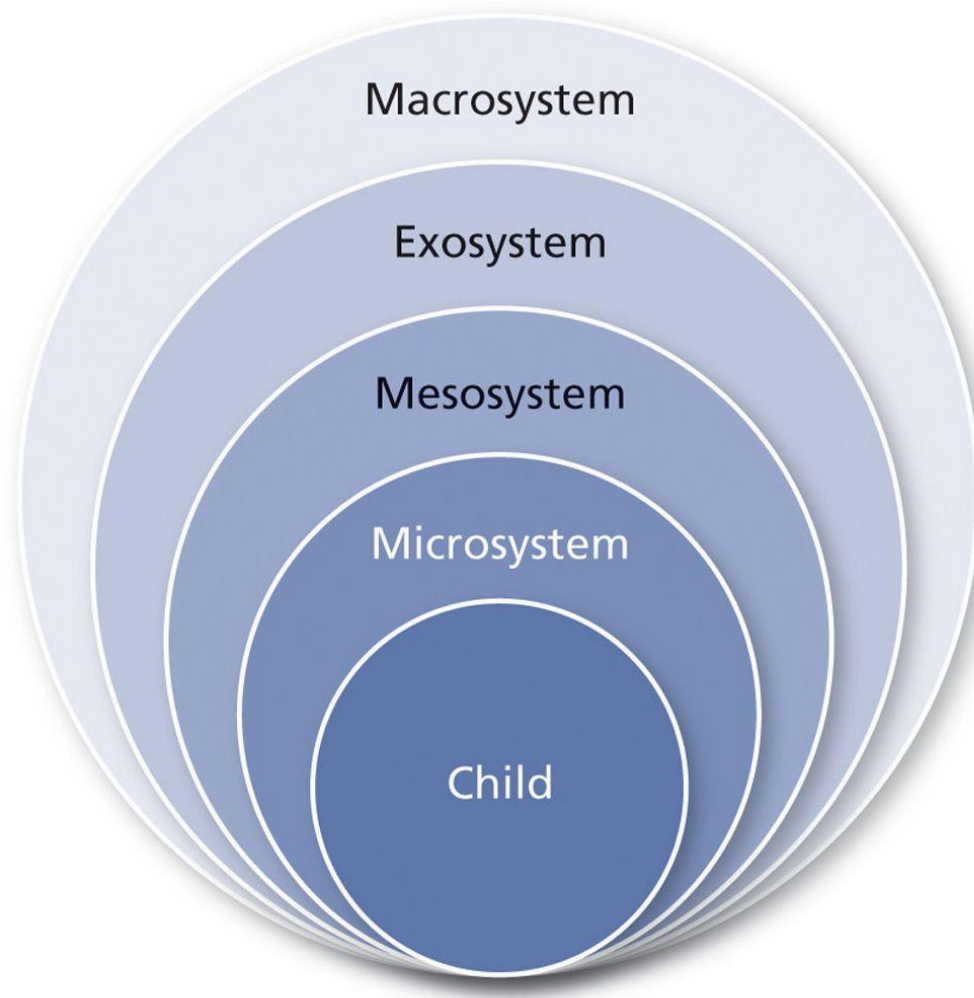
Sharing critical thinking around an
educational issue of your choice.

Be prepared to present
your critical insights in
our next session...



Urie Bronfenbrenner

Ecological Systems
Theory of
Development



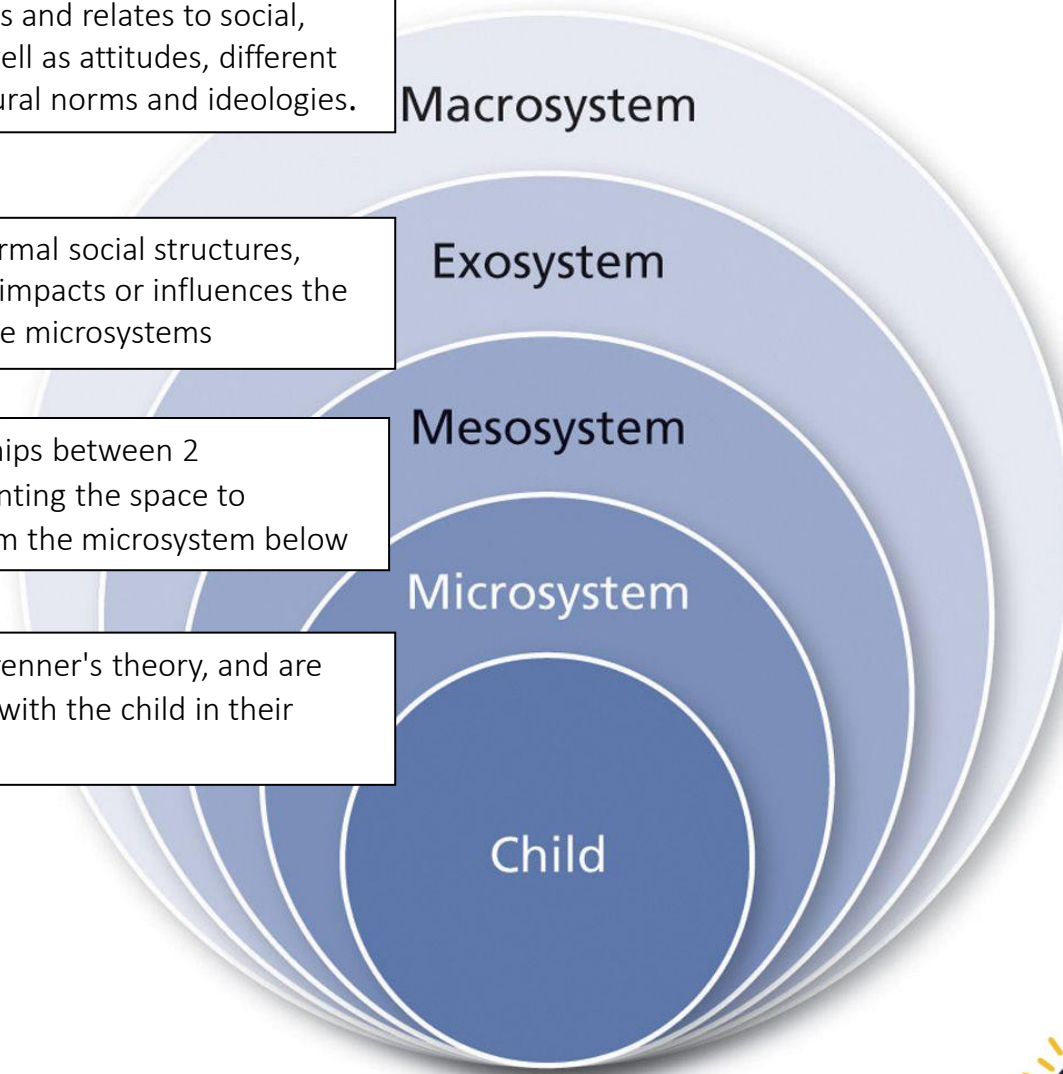
Support for task

The **macrosystem** affects all the other systems and relates to social, cultural, political and economic aspects, as well as attitudes, different dominant norms such as gender norms, cultural norms and ideologies.

The **exosystem** includes other formal and informal social structures, which do not contain the child, but indirectly impacts or influences the child as links from this system affect one of the microsystems

The **mesosystem** refers to the inter relationships between 2 microsystems – think of this circle as representing the space to consider the **links** between any 2 aspects from the microsystem below

The **microsystem** is the first level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, and are the people or places that have direct contact with the child in their **immediate** environment

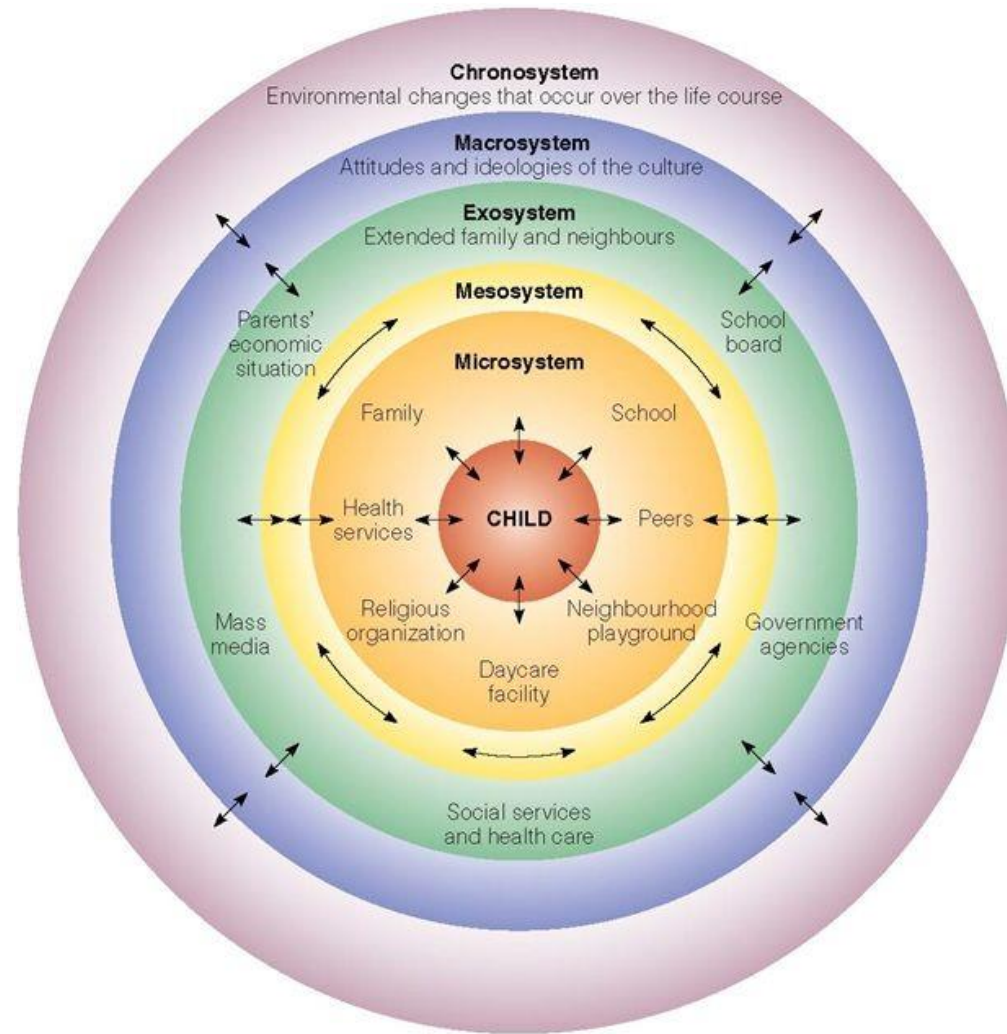


Watch this
short
YouTube
video

[Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems: 5 Forces
Impacting Our Lives – YouTube](#)

Urie
Bronfenbrenner

Ecological
Systems Theory of
Development



What is
education
policy?





‘Observing how ideas become shared is much like watching grass grow: nothing seems to be happening in the short term, but one day a former patch of mud is suddenly green.’
(Culpepper 2008)

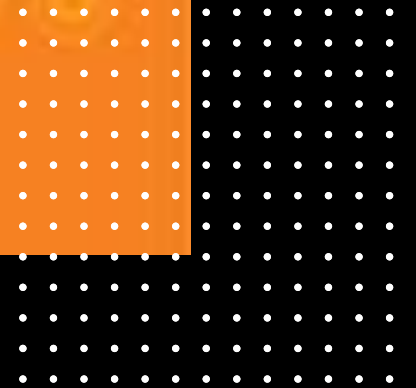
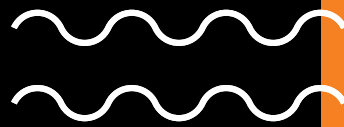
The term policy can refer to many things...

- 'a broad orientation'
- 'an indication of normal practice'
- 'a specific commitment'
- a 'statement of values'

(Coleman 2009, p.7)



Dye (1992)
describes policy
as what
governments
choose to do or
not do.



‘...aims or goals, or statements of what ought to happen’ (Blakemore, 2003)

The ‘operational statements of values’ (Kogan, 1975)

‘The implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed, or to be followed in dealing with a recognized problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy can also be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective’

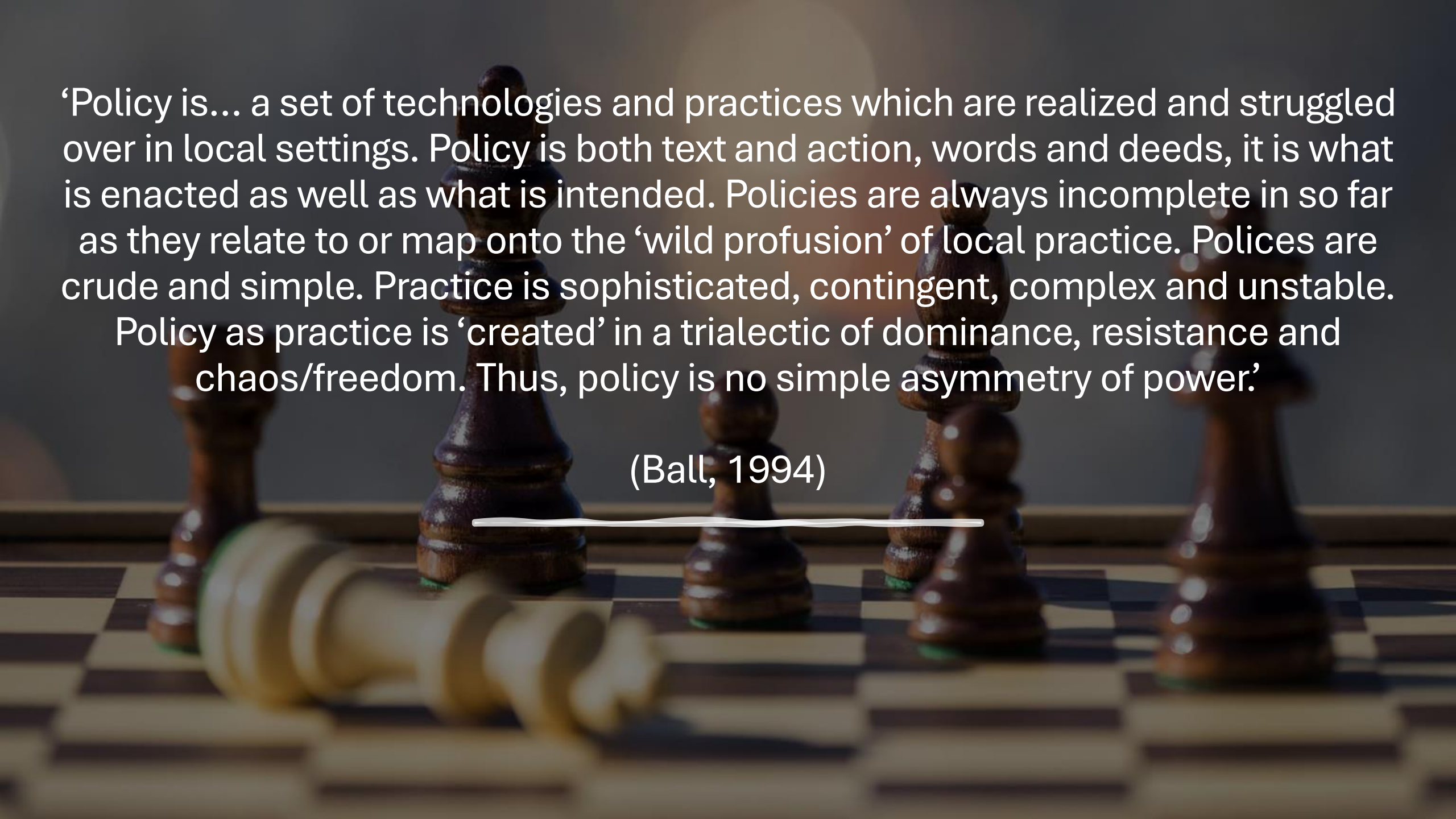
(Harman, 1984)

A word cloud of values centered around the word 'integrity'. The word 'integrity' is the largest and most prominent, written in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Surrounding it are numerous other words in various sizes, colors (including red, black, and grey), and orientations. Some of the visible words include: 'commitment', 'respect', 'honesty', 'teamwork', 'caring', 'community', 'excellence', 'service', 'trust', 'adaptability', 'loyalty', 'quality', 'professionalism', 'ethical', 'diversity', 'innovation', 'collaboration', 'proactive', 'education', 'visionary', 'performance', 'dependability', 'competency', 'friendly', 'relationships', 'passion', 'balance', 'strength', 'partnerships', 'reliable', 'growth', 'stewardship', 'environment', 'efficiency', 'legal', 'fairness', 'confidentiality', 'cooperation', 'fun', 'value', 'progressive', 'society', 'comparable', 'flexible', 'responsibility', 'consistency', 'loyalty', 'employees', 'accountability', 'democratic', 'innovative', 'approachable', 'flexible', 'prudence', 'citizenship', 'engagement', 'only', 'learning', 'knowledge', 'creativity', 'visionary', 'performance'. The background is a solid dark grey.

Easton (1953)

'authoritative allocation of values'

members teamwork



‘Policy is... a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings. Policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map onto the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. Policy as practice is ‘created’ in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom. Thus, policy is no simple asymmetry of power.’

(Ball, 1994)

‘The physical text that pops through the school letterbox, or wherever, does not arrive ‘out of the blue’ – **it has an interpretational and representational history** – and neither does it enter a social and institutional vacuum.’

(Ball, 1994)

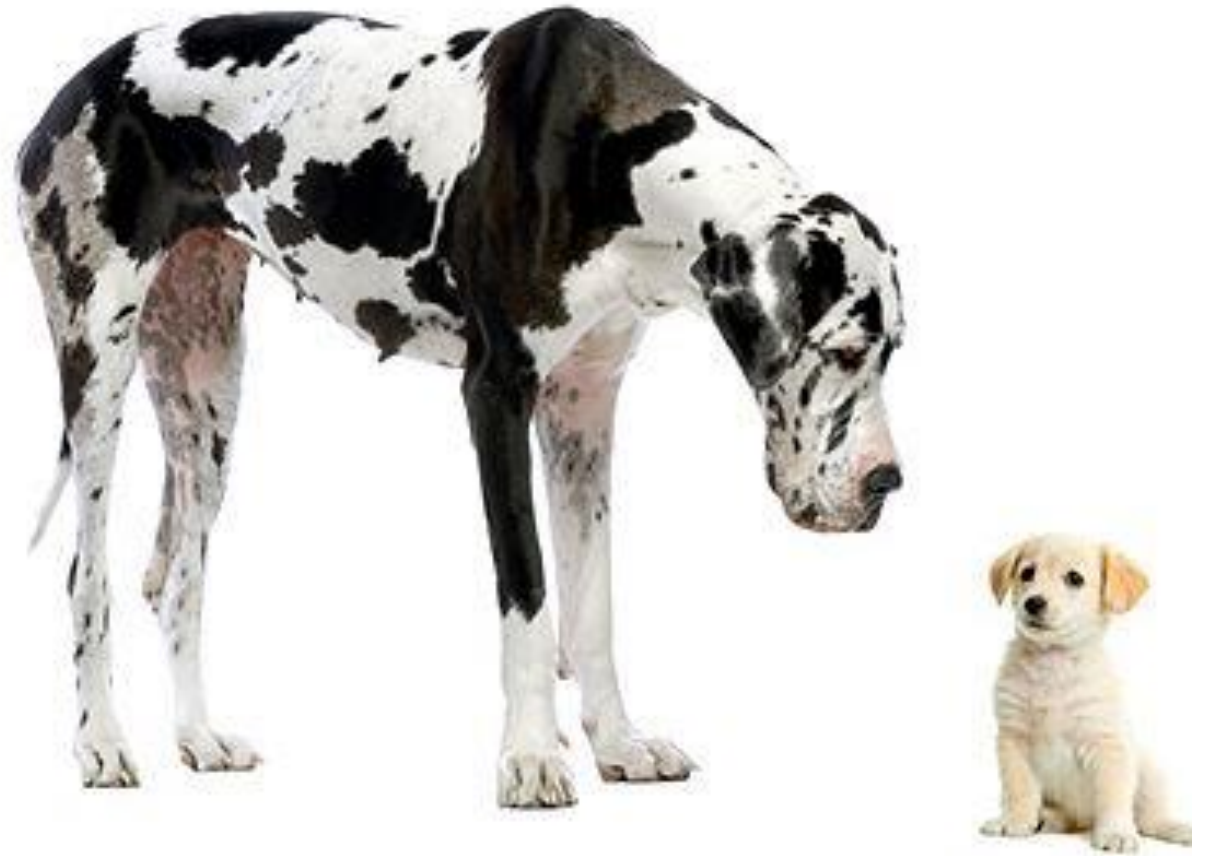
‘Policy is not done at the legislative moment, **it evolves in and through the texts that represent it**, texts have to be read in relation to the time and the particular site of their production.’

(Bowe et al. 1992)

'Big P' and 'small p'

- *Big P* policies – formal laws, rules, regulations enacted by elected officials
- *Small p* policies – organisational guidelines, internal agency decisions or memoranda, social norms guiding behaviour

(Brownson et al. 2009)



School engagement with policy

Saunders (1985, cited by Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1994) writes that schools responded to externally initiated change in one of three ways,

- 1) Adaptive extension – incorporating the policy wholesale,
- 2) Accommodation – adapting the policy generally to fit the existing structures or
- 3) Containment – existing structures absorbing the policy without radical change.

Policy development

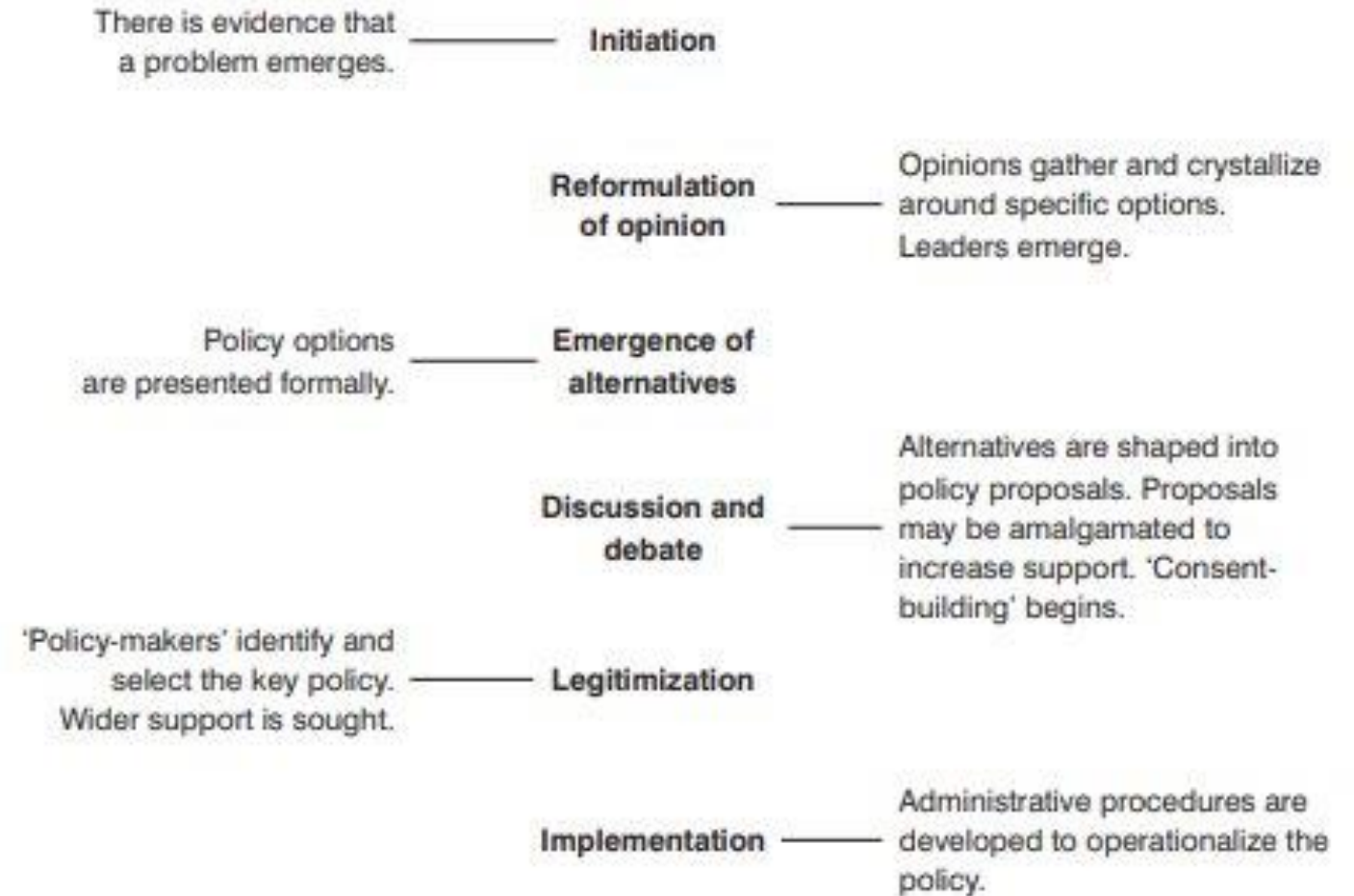


Figure 1.2 A linear model of policy development

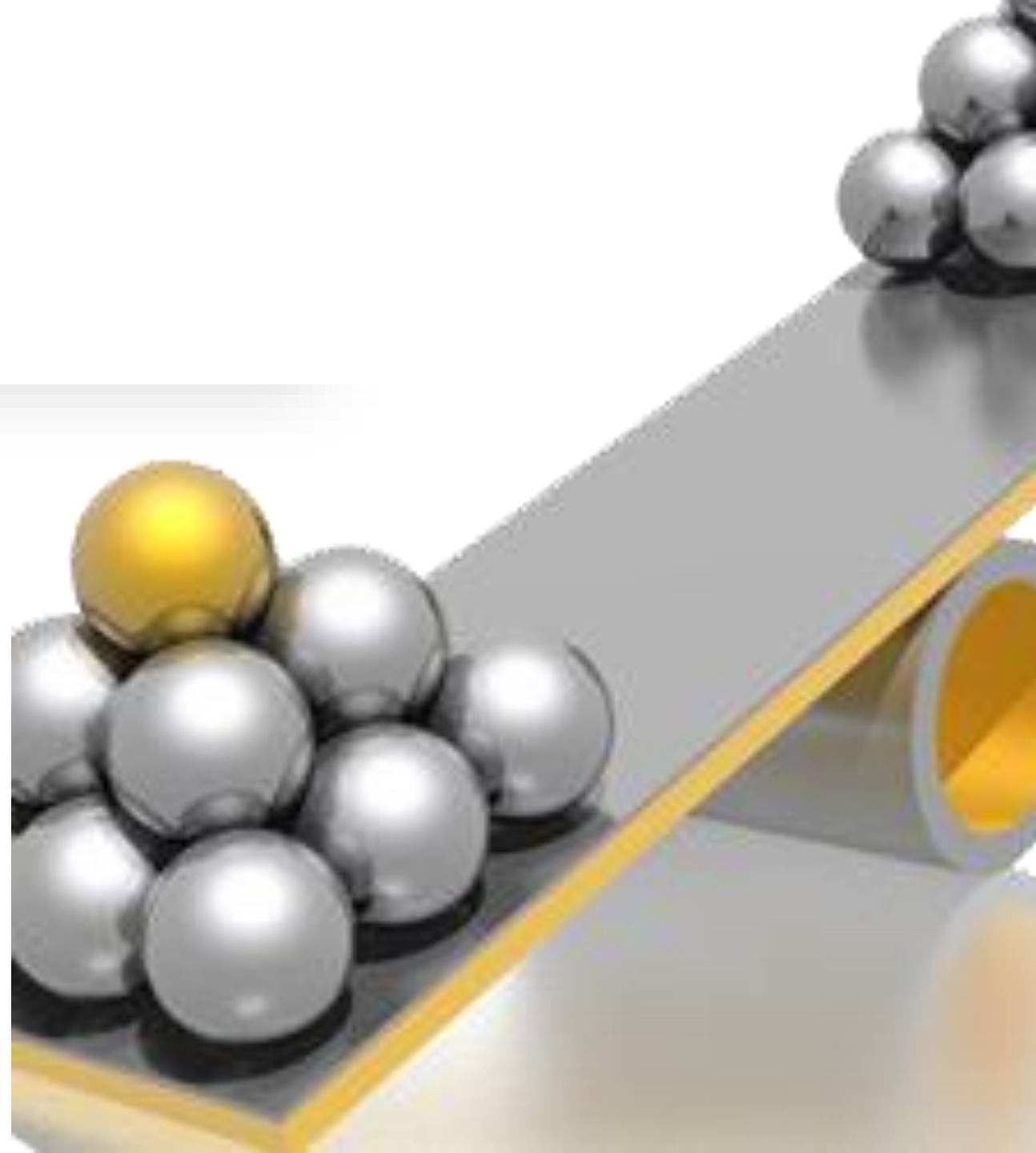
(Jennings, 1977)

Policy is political

Ball (1994) - policy as both product (text, words, what is intended) and process (actions, deeds, what is enacted).

The identification of political objectives and the power to transform values into practice through organisational principles and operational practices.

This is not a neutral process



The struggle

‘Formal schooling by and large is organized and controlled by the government. This means that by its very nature the entire schooling process – how it is paid for, what goals it seeks to attain and how these goals will be measured, who has power over it, what textbooks are approved, who does well in schools and who does not, who has the right to ask and answer these questions, and so on – is by definition political. Thus, as inherently part of a set of political institutions, the educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy, over definitions of legitimate authority and culture, and over who should benefit the most from government policies and practices.’

(Apple, 2003)

What is education for? Who is education for? Who decides?



Implementation gap

Policy



Practice



When it moves, it morphs...

- 'It is crucial to recognize that the policies themselves, the text, are not necessarily clear or closed or complete' (Ball, 1993)
- 'Education policy, even when centrally mandated, is interpreted, translated, adjusted and worked differently by diverse sets of policy actors, in processes of enactment in specific contexts.' (Singh et al, 2013)
- 'Policymakers need to understand that policy is not so much implemented as it is reinvented at each level of the system.' (Darling-Hammond, 1997)



A photograph of a roller coaster track with a train of cars ascending a steep drop. The track is orange and the support structure is blue. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text "Implementation dip" is overlaid in white, with a white wavy line underneath it.

Implementation dip

Task: small group discussion



Consider the issues and priorities in education that you have identified



What might support the implementation of policy surrounding this issue?



What barriers or challenges might there be?

Policy
levers





Policy analysis frameworks

Taylor et al. (1997) – context, texts and consequences

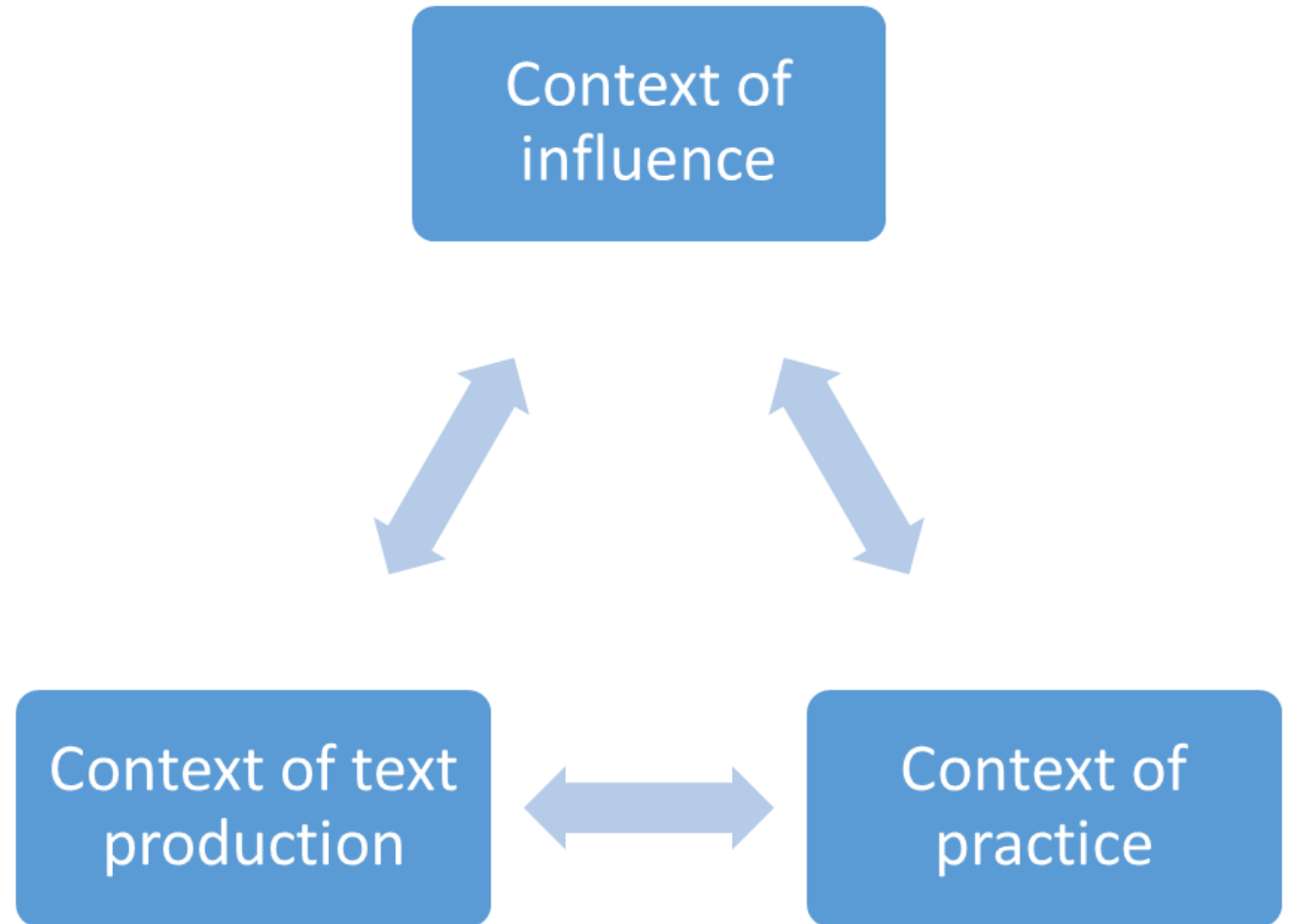
Ball (1993) – text, discourse and effects

Rizvi & Lingard (2010) – contextual, textual and outcomes

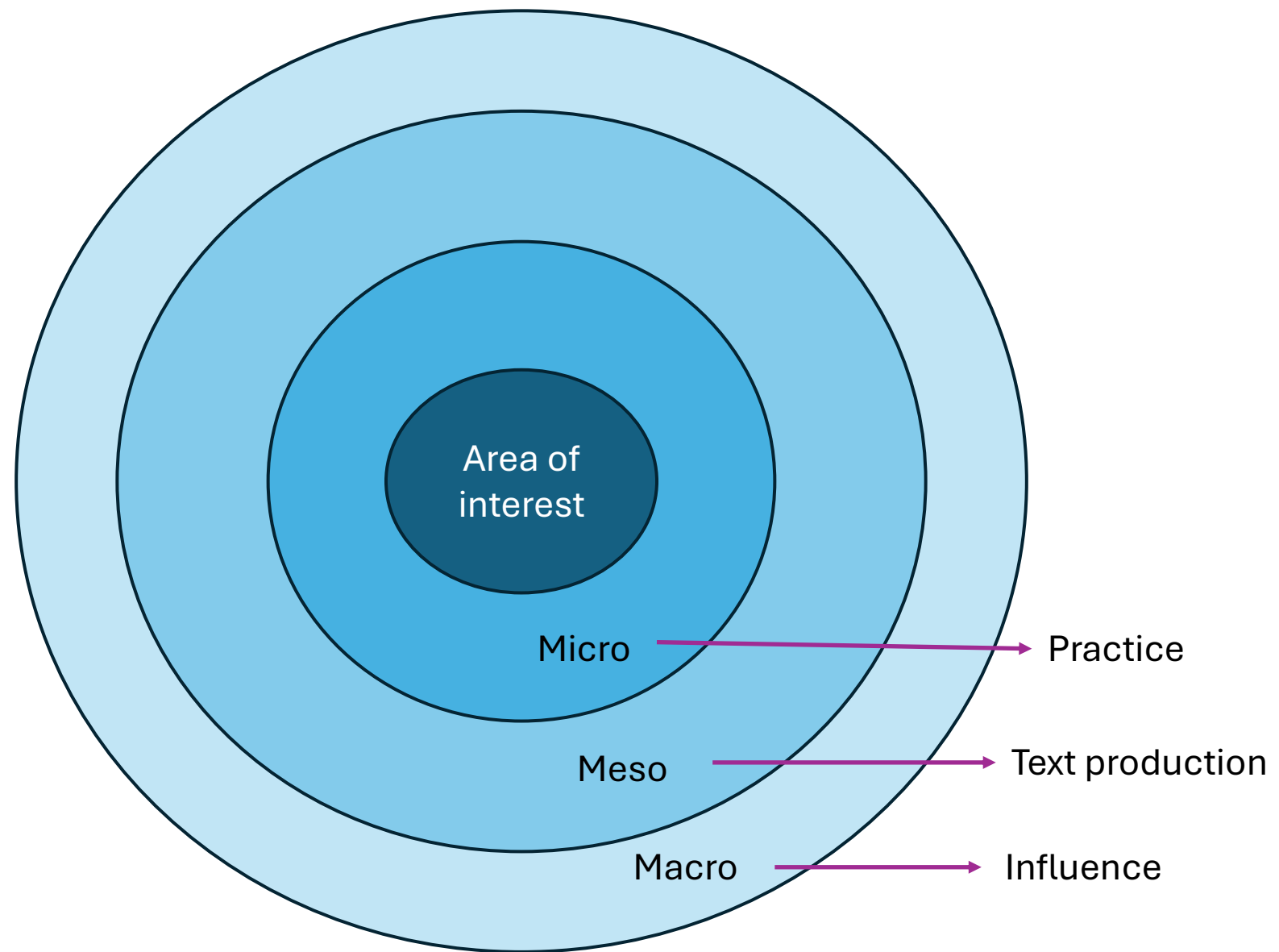
Taylor (1997): Context Text Consequences

- **Context** – What led to the development of a specific policy? Who or what influenced its introduction/development? How is it historically situated? What are the economic, social and political factors at play? To what extent does it build on, or break with, previous policy
- **Texts** – What is the content of the policy itself? How is the policy presented (and by whom)? What are its aims and objectives? What are its values and are these explicit, or implicit? Does the policy require action, if so what and by whom? What is the policy assemblage? What is missing from the policy (silences)?
- **Consequences** – How is policy interpreted and then implemented? How does this vary from region to region, from school to school, from classroom to classroom, from teacher to teacher (policy refraction)?

Contexts of policy making...



(Bowe et al., 1992)





Influence (macro) – which key people/groups influenced the development of the policy?



Text production (meso) – what policy texts were produced at the time and since, and what did they contain? In what ways did they open up/shut down opportunities for action?

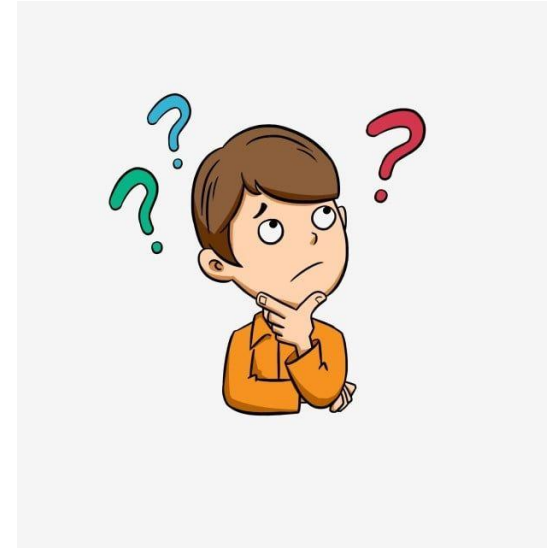


Practice (micro) – how were the policy texts interpreted in practice, and were there issues/challenges during implementation?

Questions that can form the basis of policy analysis (Taylor, 1997)

- What is the approach to education? What are the values relating to the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy?
- How are the proposals organized? How do they affect resourcing and organizational structures?
- Why was this policy adopted?
- On whose terms was the policy adopted? Why?
- On what grounds have these selections been justified? Why?
- In whose interests? How have competing interests been negotiated?
- Why now? Why has the policy emerged at this time?
- What are the consequences? In particular, what are the consequences for both processes (professional practice) and outcomes?

1. Where does it come from?
2. How does it work?
3. What is it *supposed* to do?
4. What does it *actually* do?
5. Whose interests does it serve?
6. Who does it exclude?



What has changed and what has stayed the same?

‘Educational change is almost always part of bigger changes in society, the economy and the state...’

(Ball, 2021)



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Exploring Contemporary Issues in Education 1: Policy Review and Critical Analysis Preparing for Assessment 1: Presentation

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Module 1: Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this module, students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Assess the impact of differing approaches to the presentation of policy, proposals and educational outcomes for differing audiences.
- Understand the evidence of impact that differing discourses have in promoting or mitigating the impact of educational change.
- Explore critically the relationship between education policy, implementation strategy and impact locally, nationally and internationally.
- Articulate an understanding of the challenges and opportunities in leading educational change successfully.

At this stage of the module we are working together to begin to develop these capabilities

Module 1: Promise

**By working together-
and you listening to and
supporting one another**

- From discussion to critical analysis
- Presenting and discussing your interests
- Academic poster presentation
- Academic writing
- Developing your policy interest/ focus throughout



Module 1: Details of Assessment

Assessment Component 1 – 20% (Monday 12th October 2026)

Prepare a presentation for your fellow EdD students that critically evaluates a contemporary issue in education of your choice, its representation in official statements, media treatments and your understanding of its treatment in an international context.
(10-minute presentation).

Assessment Component 2 – 30% (Monday 2nd November 2026)

You are asked create an academic poster outlining the planning and preparation for component 3. This should present how your thinking has evolved around the educational issue that you have chosen and provide a rationale for the direction of the focus of your study (equivalent to 2250 words).

Assessment Component 3 – 50% (Monday 23rd November 2026)

Written report on policy surrounding a contemporary issue in education (3,750 words).

Presentation



**Academic
Poster**

From today – and first thoughts- to narrowing your focus

- Less is more – fewer ideas done well
- Depth over breadth – forensic, not superficial analysis
- Eye on the prize – start with key points and work out

**Build a watertight argument... plug all
holes**

**Policy
Report**

Timings/schedule for presentations:

Assessment 1

Assessment Component 1 – 20% (Tuesday 13th October 2026)

Task

Prepare a presentation for your fellow EdD students that critically evaluates a contemporary issue in education of your choice, its representation in official statements, media treatments and your understanding of its treatment in an international context.

Formative tasks:

- ✓ **What** is the contemporary issue?
- ✓ **How** chosen documents help you- and others- to understand policy and practice that relates to your chosen issue
- ✓ **How** to analyse the issue you have chosen?

Academic conference presentation



Structure:

1. Title slide: The policy issue chosen. Your name. Module code.
2. (“ Say what you are going to say”) Introduction: *What* is your contemporary issue and aim of your presentation? (“ Say it” Slides 3- 8)
3. Why you have chosen the issue – and how your chosen policy impacts on one or two of the following : children- young people- students- parents- schools- universities- a province- national government
4. Government policy: You could emphasise ‘what is the policy’ , ‘how you have begun to evaluate the policy’ and ‘why this matters’
5. One example of official statement/ policy document of Government. (see previous guidance on moodle page on how you could evaluate the document using the work of Ozga). Argue how this helps you to begin to critically evaluate the issue
6. An example of how the media treats the issue- and why this is relevant
- 7&8. Questions you have begun to ask about your chosen policy – and research that relates to this (remember : select examples of research on how your chosen policy impacts on one or two of the following : children- young people- students- parents- schools-universities- a province- national government
- 10 References (see UWTSD Harvard referencing guide)
- 9 (“ Say what you have said”) Your conclusion : Emphasise what your aim has been and questions you have asked

10 minutes



Things to consider
about design and
delivery





Questions?

References:

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DOI:10.1080/02680939.2013.770554 <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/Mrbka8hNRFZTZZ935RXq/full>
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