

International Studies in Educational Administration

Journal of the Commonwealth
Council for Educational
Administration & Management



CCEAM

Volume 48 • Number 1 • 2020

International Studies in Educational Administration by the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM). Details of the CCEAM and its affiliated national societies throughout the Commonwealth are given at the end of this issue.

Enquiries about subscriptions and submissions of papers should be addressed to the editor, Associate Professor David Gurr via email at: admin@cceam.org; website: www.cceam.org.

Commonwealth

Members of CCEAM receive the journal as part of their membership. Other subscribers in Commonwealth countries receive a discount, and pay the Commonwealth rates as stated below. Payment should be made to the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM).

The rest of the world

Subscribers in the rest of the world should send their orders and payment to the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM).

Account details for all payments are as follows

Account name: Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration c/o Dr. Patricia Briscoe

Bank: Royal Bank of Canada, 2855 Pembina Hwy – Unit 26, Winnipeg, MB, R3T 2H5

Institution number: 003

Transit number: 08067

Account number: 1009232

Swift code: ROYCCAT2

Subscription rates for 2020

Institutions, Commonwealth	£150
Institutions, rest of world	£170
Individuals, Commonwealth	£30
Individuals, rest of world	£35

© CCEAM, 2020

International Studies in Educational Administration (ISEA) aims to enhance the effectiveness of educational leadership, management and administration to support intellectual, personal and social learning in schools, colleges and universities and related educational, social and economic development in a range of national contexts. It publishes research- and scholarship-based papers within the broad field of educational leadership, management, and administration including its connections with educational/social policy, and professional practice. It focuses on the Commonwealth and beyond. It is strongly international in that, while it may publish empirical research or scholarship undertaken in specific national or regional contexts, papers consider issues and themes of interest that transcend single national settings. Papers offer new facts or ideas to academics, policy-makers and practitioners in education in varied national contexts ranging from advanced economies to the least economically developed countries. The journal aims to provide a balance between papers that present theoretical, applied or comparative research, and between papers from different methodological contexts, different scales of analysis, and different access to research resources. Editorial Correspondence and Books for Review should be sent to the Editors. Business Correspondence should be sent to the President or the CEO. ISEA adopts review procedures common to highly regarded international academic journals. Each paper is reviewed by the editors to judge suitability for the journal, and if accepted then undergoes a double-blind review process involving two international reviewers.

Contents

Editorial Note DAVID GURR	1
Speak a Different Language: Reimagine the Grammar of Schooling YONG ZHAO	4
Leadership of Special Schools on the Other Side BRIAN J. CALDWELL	11
Inclusive Leadership During the COVID-19 Pandemic: How to Respond Within an Inclusion Framework ELAINE FOURNIER, SHELLEYANN SCOTT AND DONALD E. SCOTT	17
Leadership for Challenging Times DAVID GURR AND LAWRIE DRYSDALE	24
Adaptive Leadership: Leading Through Complexity RYAN DUNN	31
Leading With Empathy and Humanity: Why Talent-Centred Education Leadership is Especially Critical Amidst the Pandemic Crisis HENRY TRAN, SUZY HARDIE AND KATHLEEN M. W. CUNNINGHAM	39
Educational Inequality and the Pandemic in Australia: Time to Shift the Educational Paradigm TERESA ANGELICO	46
A Policy Maker's Guide to Practical Courses of Action for Current and Post COVID-19 Effects in Liberian Schools BOLUMANI SONDAH	54
Understanding Educational Responses to School Closure During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case for Equity in Nigeria IDOWU MARY MOGAJI	59

Home Education as Alternative to Institutional Schooling in Nigeria: Lessons From COVID-19 ADELEKE AYOBAMI GIDEON	66
The Role of Local Authorities in the English School System: Why Did the Coronavirus Pandemic Subvert 30 Years of Neoliberal Policy? IAN DEWES	72
Academic Integrity During COVID-19: Reflections From the University of Calgary SARAH ELAINE EATON	80
Can Ghanaian Universities Still Attract International Students in Spite of COVID-19? FESTUS NYAME AND EKUA ABEDI-BOAFO	86
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Work of University Administrators in Ghana GEORGE KWADWO ANANE, PAUL KWADWO ADDO, ABRAHAM ADUSEI AND CHRISTOPHER ADDO	93
Transitioning to Online Distance Learning in the COVID-19 Era: A Call for Skilled Leadership in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) DARCIA ROACHE, DINA ROWE-HOLDER AND RICHARD MUSCHETTE	103

Speak a Different Language: Reimagine the Grammar of Schooling

Yong Zhao

Abstract: *The 'grammar' of schooling identified by David Tyack and William Tobin in the 1990s is the core business of schools. Despite numerous efforts by numerous smart, innovative, and sometimes even powerful individuals to make changes, the 'grammar' stays pretty much the same. There are plenty of reasons why it should not be the way to organise schooling, yet it still is. During COVID-19, is it possible to make changes to the 'grammar'? My argument is that it probably is not. I argue that instead of fixing or changing the grammar, we need to speak a different language: instead of speaking schooling, we need to speak education.*

Keywords: Grammar of schooling, educational change, innovations

Speak a Different Language: Reimagine the Grammar of Schooling

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched every aspect of the human society. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost. Industries have been changed. How we live, work, and play has been changed. Schools, too, have been changed. But one thing it has not changed is the 'grammar' of schooling: 'the regular structures and rules that organise the work of instruction' (Tyack & Tobin 1994: 454).

Over a quarter of a century ago, education historians David Tyack and William Tobin (1994) made the very insightful observation that schools have a set of grammatical rules and structures just like natural languages and:

Neither the grammar of schooling nor the grammar of speech needs to be consciously understood to operate smoothly. Indeed, much of the grammar of schooling has become so well established that it is typically taken for granted as just the way schools are. It is the departure from customary practice in schooling or speaking that attracts attention. (p. 454)

The grammar of schooling, such as 'standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into "subjects"' (Tyack & Tobin 1994: 454) is so powerful that it has persisted despite many repeated challenges by very courageous, intelligent, and powerful innovators. It has persisted

despite mounting evidence and widespread acknowledgement that it is obsolete and does not serve our children well. It has persisted even during the most powerful pandemic—COVID-19 in this century, when students are not attending the physical school.

COVID-19 forced the closure of virtually all schools in the world for different amounts of time. But when schools were closed, when students were staying home, and when there were specific policies and restrictions for students not to be together physically, the ideal was still to offer schooling to all students, to replicate schools online, and in essence to follow the grammar of schooling. By and large, when schools were closed, governments and schools have worked together and/or independently to create a sense of ‘schooling’ for all students using whatever technology they had. So in essence, schools were expanded into the large society. Students were taking classes from TVs, mobile devices, computers and/or paper packages and teachers were teaching online. But the format kept the grammar of schooling: teachers were managing their students in the same way as they did before, the content of online teaching was pretty much the same, classes were offered the same way as before (with some variation of amount of time, perhaps), and knowledge was still splintered into subjects as before.

COVID-19 and Schools

Perhaps the basic ‘grammar’ of schooling cannot be changed just like the basic grammar of English cannot be changed. In fact, if the grammar of English were changed, it would not be English anymore. Likewise, if the grammar of schooling were changed, it would not be school anymore. And that is very worrisome to people who want a ‘real school’ and that worry of not having a real school is responsible for defeating attempts to reform schools because ‘so powerful is the hold of the cultural construction of what constitutes a “real school”’ (Tyack & Tobin 1994: 478).

But what if we cannot have schools anymore, not because we don’t want them but because we cannot have them due to COVID-19. The virus is still alive and far from eradicated. Vaccines have not been developed and there is still much to learn about it. Many experts are expecting an even worse second wave. As such, schools may or may not be open as they were before the pandemic.

Many governments and school systems have been working on reopening schools with serious considerations of the impact of COVID-19. While the details of the reopening plans and strategies differ, there are a few points in common. First, students will go through serious checks to ensure that they are not infected with the virus. Second, frequent hand washing is to be implemented. Third, social distancing is to be implemented. That is, students need to sit at least six feet apart. The third one makes it impossible for many schools to have all students back to school as before. Additionally, some parents will not send their children to schools. Thus schools will have to adopt other methods to make sure education goes on for all students, even when they are home.

The system that manages schools is changing as well due to COVID-19. These changes may be short term but have happened. Hopefully they will be changed forever. Such changes include the suspension of accountability measures such as state and national assessments. Many education systems have suspended their accountability assessments. Large influential high-stakes testing such as the SAT and ACT in the U.S. have been suspended. International education systems such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) have stopped testing as well.

In essence, many schools will be different and the difference may be so big that schools are not schools as before. In this case, does it make sense to make non-schools school? Can we rethink a different grammar? Instead of changing the grammar of schooling, can we think about a grammar of learning or a grammar of education? What would that look like?

Speak a Different Language?

What the public wants and society needs is not schooling; it is education. The school happens to be the institution we built at a certain point of time to deliver education. The design was inevitably constrained by the understanding of learning and the learner, teacher and teaching, and operating of organisations as well as the resources and technology available at that moment. The rules that govern schools were made and further refined for schools, typically physical locations with a group of adults to teach a predefined curriculum to a group of youth. This arrangement defines the most basic grammar of schooling; the school has something to teach students (the curriculum); the teaching is best done with similar children (age-based as was understood); children must be managed and monitored by adults (classes); children must go through so many subjects so they need to rotate through them (class and subjects) each and every day. Moreover, schools had to respond to the needs of the human society so summer and winter vacations were built in line with the norm of the societies when schools were built.

Without schools, we can think about education. The grammar of education can be quite different from that of schooling. Because the purpose of education can be different in different societies, the education I am writing about in this paper may not apply to all societies and cultures. If the purpose of education is to help each and every individual to realise their full potential, to help each and every child to be able to succeed in modern societies, and to help each and every child to become responsible citizens of local and global communities, we could imagine a different set of grammatical rules.

These rules, for example, could start from the learner. If the learner were the owner of learning rather than a recipient of pre-determined instruction, the first rule would be the learner decides what to learn in collaboration with adults so the curriculum is not predetermined. Instead, it is emergent. When the curriculum is emergent and largely determined by the learner, the role of the adults changes. The adults or teachers do not supervise or teach the learner. Instead, they respond to the learners' emerging needs. As a result, since learning is owned and managed by individual learners, teachers/adults do not necessarily teach

prepared lessons to groups of students. Instead they can refer students to hosts of online instructions and may provide highly personalised tutoring or mentoring. If adults do not teach a group of learners, their relationship with the learner changes drastically, so do their responsibilities.

This arrangement changes other rules in schools too. When adults do not teach classes as instructors, we do not need to split a day into so many classes each day. They can meet with groups of learners or individual learner based on needs. The learners do not need to be in one place or pretend to be in one place through technology because they do not need to be in one place listening to the same instructor.

There can be many other changes as we begin to reimagine what's possible when there are no schools. I am hoping that education leaders would begin thinking about education and learning rather than keeping schools operating as before during COVID-19. Below are some examples of how to start reimagining the grammar of schooling.

Reimagine the Grammar of Schooling

To move away from traditional grammar of schooling to a grammar of education or learning can take a long time, but we need to start. To start changing, education leaders can consider how to change some of the most salient features of the grammar of schooling. These features have been discussed before and some schools have tackled them quite successfully already. So these are not new ideas or novel approaches.

Scheduling

Schooling sometimes works against education. How it structures time is a good example: a year is divided into different segments, some of which (terms/semesters) are designated for learning while others (summer/winter vacations) are not; terms/semesters are divided into different chunks marked by exams (mid-term and end of term); days are divided into class periods. When schools are structured this way, following the traditional grammar of schooling, the outcomes are not necessarily great.

For example, there is ample evidence of 'summer learning loss' (Cooper 2003; Kerry & Davies 1998; Sandberg Patton & Reschly 2013). A Brookings Institution review of research shows: (1) on average, students' achievement scores declined over summer vacation by one month's worth of school-year learning, (2) declines were sharper for math than for reading, and (3) the extent of loss was larger at higher grade levels (Quinn & Polikoff 2017).

There have been many different proposals to address this issue. But it seems apparent that keeping the schools operating all the time may be the obvious solution. Thus, could we change learning into year-round? Is it possible for schools to reorganise staff so that the learners can be with professional adults all the time, online and or face-to-face?

Another issue with school time is timetabling. Quite often deep, authentic, product/project/problem-based learning projects can last much longer than one semester, but the project must end when a semester ends because the teacher needs to give the students a grade and/or the course is not continued the next semester. Furthermore, it is known that meaningful learning requires much more than 35 or 45 minutes, but the learning must stop because students have to go to another class. Timetables have also been one of the most challenging problems when trying to introduce new ideas. Even when school leaders and teachers recognise the importance of teaching something new, they often run into the problem of lacking openings in the timetable.

In the language of education, these constraints or rules that govern schooling should be removed. There is no particular good reason to chunk school time as we used to do. When students are learning from home, they do not have to be in 'class' with others at the same time. Perhaps they can study in small groups at times of their choice.

Subjects

Another example of schooling working against education is the practice of 'splintering knowledge into subjects', which goes hand in hand with splitting learning time into class periods. While there are some subjects that may be better taught as individual subjects for some students, the habit of splintering everything into subjects and then translating subjects into courses is detrimental to the development of the whole child. It forces the development of essential competences such as creativity, entrepreneurial thinking, and global competence into isolated boxes as if these competences could be developed without deep knowledge and skills in certain domains or as if math or science could be divorced from these competences. For example, social and emotional wellbeing has to be taught as a separate class, as if social and emotional wellbeing could not be developed in other subjects.

Is it then possible for educational leaders to consider combining subjects into large projects so that the learner can learn the content of multiple subjects together? This is an excellent time to try changing this rule of the grammar of schooling. School leaders can ask teachers of different subjects to examine the essence of their subjects and work on designing large projects for the learners. To take a step further, the learners can be invited to the examination and design process so that their views are respected.

Student Grouping

Grouping students by age is another feature of the 'grammar of schooling' that runs contrary to education. We know that children's abilities vary a great deal and are not neatly aligned with their chronological age, but they are often stuck in the grade level corresponding to their age. Some children may be above and others may be below what is taught. The result is that both groups are frustrated and disengaged. While the topic of ability grouping is controversial (partly because the term has many different meanings), we cannot ignore the

fact that grouping students according to their ages does lead to poor educational experiences for a large proportion of children.

Students must be put into groups in schools because a group of students must be taught or supervised by an adult. The image of a class without a teacher in front of a blackboard violates the 'grammar' of schooling. But the need to meet the needs of each and every child has long been recognised. There has been a growing call for personalised learning (Xie, Chu, Hwang & Wang 2019). In addition, there is ample evidence of benefits of peer mentoring, social learning, and collaborative learning online and face-to-face (DuBois & Karcher 2013; Laal & Ghodsi 2012). In other words, learners can learn from each other, from the Internet, and from other adults who are not their teachers.

At a time when students cannot come to schools at the same time, it would be wonderful to rethink how to group students. Perhaps one way is to have students organise their own groups as small learning communities or project teams. Another way would be for individual students to follow their own pathways, but when they feel necessary, the teacher can group students with similar questions.

Summary

Tyack and Tobin's essay in 1994 has a depressing and discouraging message for innovators. The history of education is not filled with success stories of innovations that challenge the 'grammar' of schooling. According to them, the innovators have tried:

- to create ungraded, not graded, schools
- to use time, space, and numbers of students as flexible resources and to diversify uniform periods, same-sized rooms, and standard class size
- to merge specialized subjects into core courses in junior and high schools or, alternatively, to introduce departmental specialization into the elementary school
- to group teachers in teams, rather than having them work as isolated individuals in self-contained classrooms.

Typically, these innovations have not lasted for long. (Tyack & Tobin 1994: 455)

I hope this time can be different. The changes I propose here have been advocated elsewhere (Zhao 2012, 2018; Zhao, Emler, Snethen & Yin 2019) but I see COVID-19 as a great opportunity. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused so much damage and disruption in every aspect of human society that its impact will last a long time into the future. It will alter many industries forever. I hope it has given us the opportunity to abandon schooling for education. But the key is not to improve schooling or replicate schooling online. Instead, we should try to speak a different language so we can adopt a different grammar.

References

- Cooper, H. M. (2003). *Summer Learning Loss: The problem and some solutions*: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education Champaign, IL.
- DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (2013). *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kerry, T., & Davies, B. (1998). Summer learning loss: The evidence and a possible solution. *Support for Learning, 13*(3), 118-122.
- Laal, M., & Ghodsi, S. M. (2012). Benefits of collaborative learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 31*, 486-490.
- Quinn, D. M., & Polikoff, M. (2017). Summer Learning Loss: What is it, and what can we do about it? (retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/summer-learning-loss-what-is-it-and-what-can-we-do-about-it/>).
- Sandberg Patton, K. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2013). Using curriculum-based measurement to examine summer learning loss. *Psychology in the Schools, 50*(7), 738-753.
- Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The 'grammar' of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(3), 453-479.
- Xie, H., Chu, H.-C., Hwang, G.-J., & Wang, C.-C. (2019). Trends and development in technology-enhanced adaptive/personalized learning: A systematic review of journal publications from 2007 to 2017. *Computers & Education, 140*, 103599.
- Zhao, Y. (2012). *World Class Learners: Educating creative and entrepreneurial students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Zhao, Y. (2018). *Reach for Greatness: Personalizable education for all children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Zhao, Y., Emler, T. E., Snethen, A., & Yin, D. (2019). *An Education Crisis Is a Terrible Thing to Waste: How radical changes can spark student excitement and success*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Author Details

Yong Zhao
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
University of Melbourne
School of Education
University of Kansas
Email: yongzhaeducation@gmail.com