

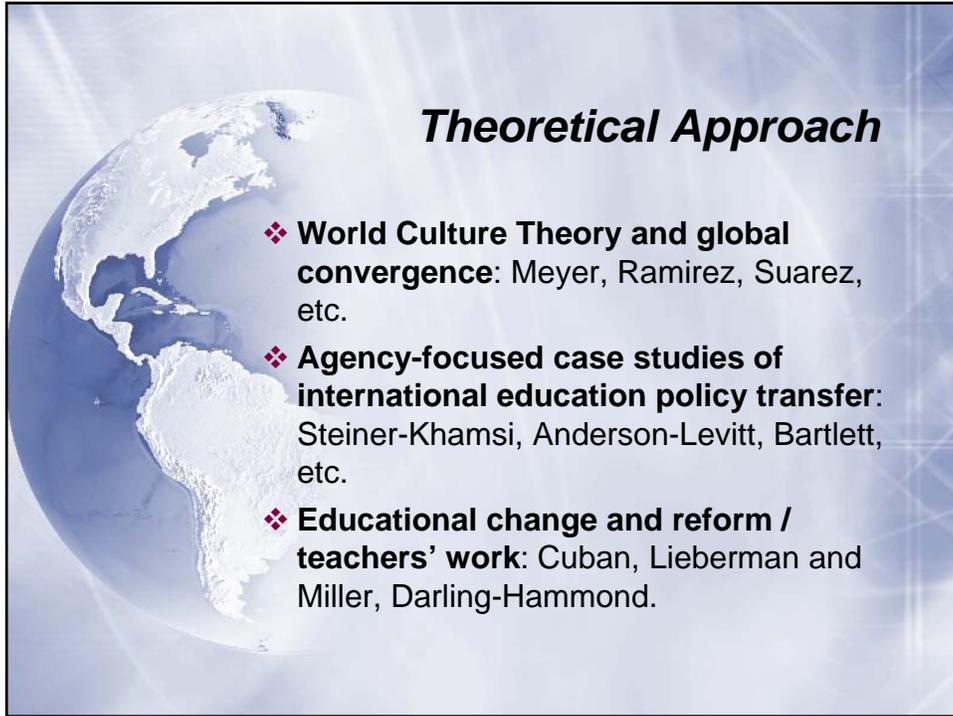
*Agents of Change and Continuity:
The Pivotal Role of Teachers in Albanian Educational
Reform and Democratization*

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Research puzzle(s)

- How do teachers navigate and respond to the competing pressures of complex school life amid increasingly influential global frames for national education reform?
- *Sidenote: How universal are these issues?*



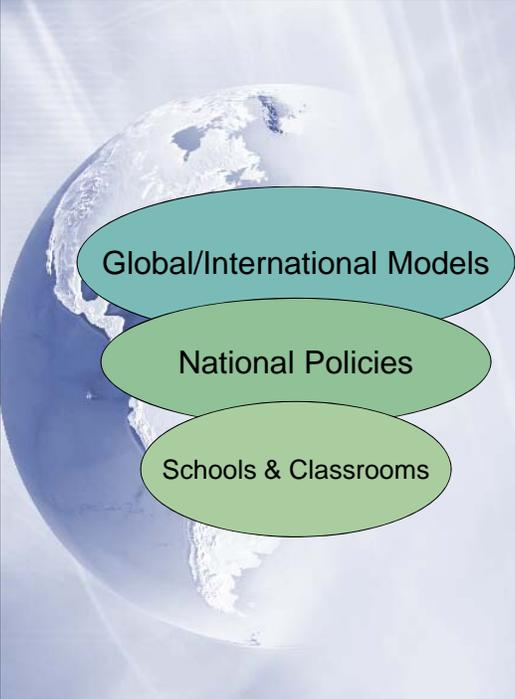
Theoretical Approach

- ❖ **World Culture Theory and global convergence:** Meyer, Ramirez, Suarez, etc.
- ❖ **Agency-focused case studies of international education policy transfer:** Steiner-Khamsi, Anderson-Levitt, Bartlett, etc.
- ❖ **Educational change and reform / teachers' work:** Cuban, Lieberman and Miller, Darling-Hammond.



Methodological Approach

- ❖ **Vavrus and Bartlett (2009):** Vertical case offers more nuanced analysis at multiple levels
- ❖ **Stevick and Levinson (2007):** International qualitative, ethnographic case studies of citizenship education help us understand meaning; local, cultural, and historical richness
- ❖ **Riessman (2008):** Thematic and performance narrative analysis with attention to "hidden transcripts" of power relations (Scott, 1990)



Methodology: *A Vertical Case Study*

- ❖ 32 months in Albania between 2003-2009
- ❖ 70 semi-structured interviews (45 participants)
- ❖ 3 school sites in urban center and periphery schools (Tirana, Lezhe, Korca)
- ❖ 121 hours of classroom, school, and program observation (16+50+55)
- ❖ National and international policy analysis



Case Context: Albania

- ❖ Nearly 3 million people
- ❖ Post-communist, post-authoritarian parliamentary democracy since 1991
- ❖ Literacy: 98.7% (reading over 9)
- ❖ Financial crisis: 1997
- ❖ Kosova/o refugees: 1999
- ❖ NATO member since 2009
- ❖ Hilary Clinton (Nov, 2012): “A model for the world”!

*Albanian Landscapes:
Change and Continuity*



*Rural and
Periphery Albania*





Policy Harmonization

2004-2014

Albania has increasingly pursued EU membership.

- ❖ In 2008, the Albanian government passed the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2007-2013) or NSDI.
- ❖ Prime Minister Sali Berisha claims this document combines the “principal agendas of the Government of Albania” by incorporating international discourses on “sustainable economic and social development, integration into the European Union and NATO structures, as well as achievement of [UN] Millennium Challenge Goals” into one unified strategy document.



Teachers as Change Agents

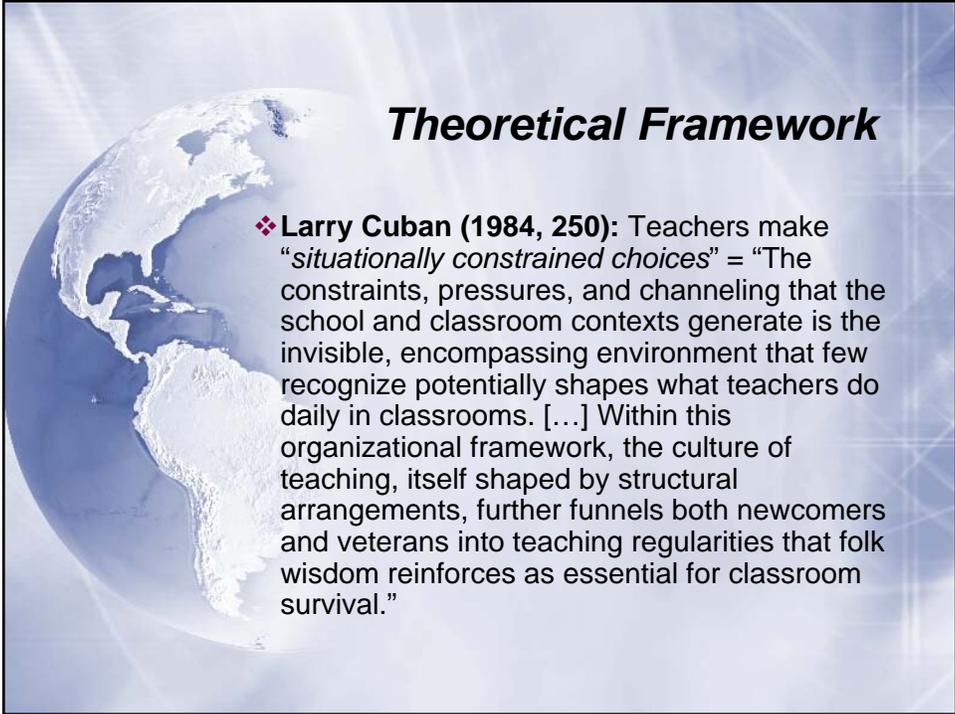
Schools that were once created and legitimized as an apparatus of a centralized political system are now seen as **preparatory engines for democratic citizenship**. The role of teachers within these institutions is to catalyze the necessary participation and preparation to reach these transformational goals. In this context, teachers act as agents of change.



Teachers' role within a changing educational landscape

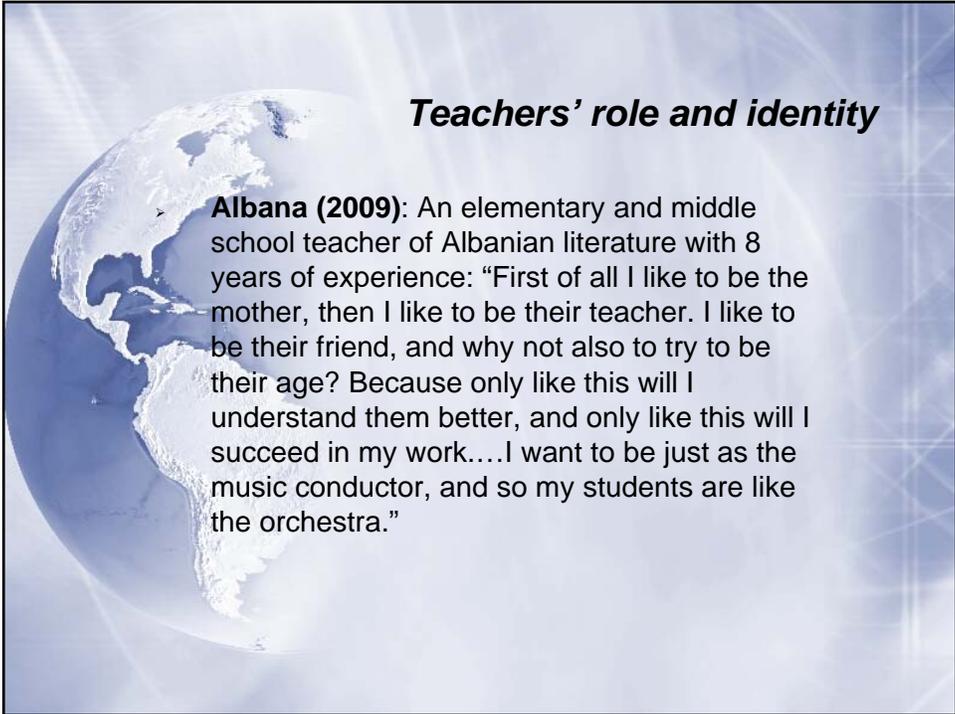
Teachers:

- ❖ Play a pivotal role in implementing reforms
- ❖ Navigate the complexity of the school context including poor physical conditions, lack of resources and information, new curricula, changing power dynamics, job insecurity, and a range of other factors on a daily basis
- ❖ Are positioned by school leadership, parents, students, and shifting policies concerning their professionalization and practice
- ❖ Are hesitant to relinquish authority and are ultimately concerned with their professional reputation as well as student learning outcomes



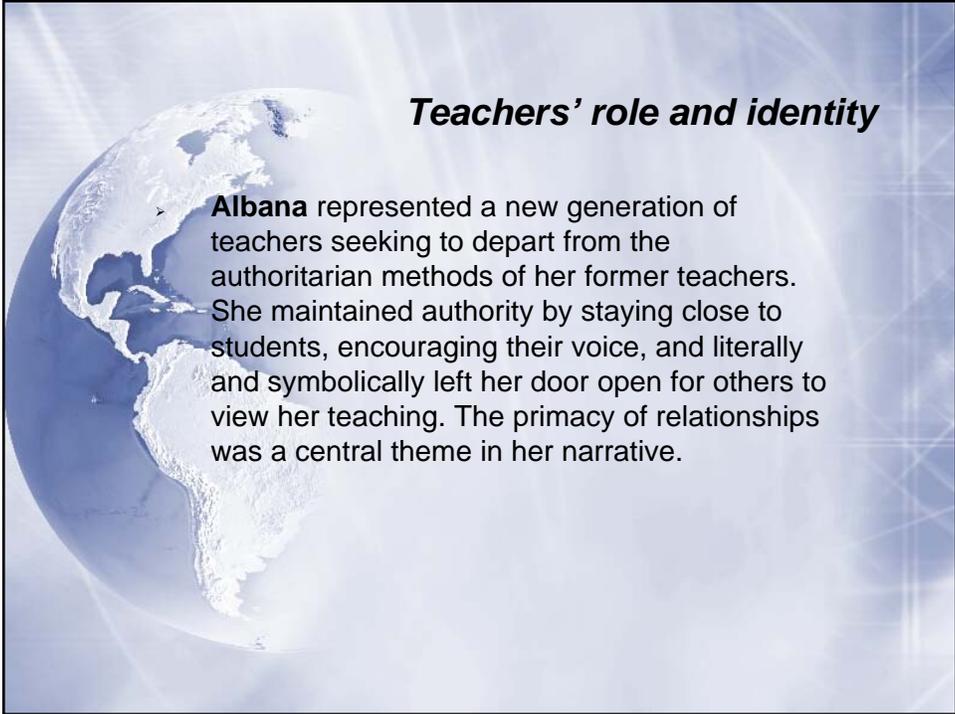
Theoretical Framework

❖ **Larry Cuban (1984, 250):** Teachers make “*situationally constrained choices*” = “The constraints, pressures, and channeling that the school and classroom contexts generate is the invisible, encompassing environment that few recognize potentially shapes what teachers do daily in classrooms. [...] Within this organizational framework, the culture of teaching, itself shaped by structural arrangements, further funnels both newcomers and veterans into teaching regularities that folk wisdom reinforces as essential for classroom survival.”



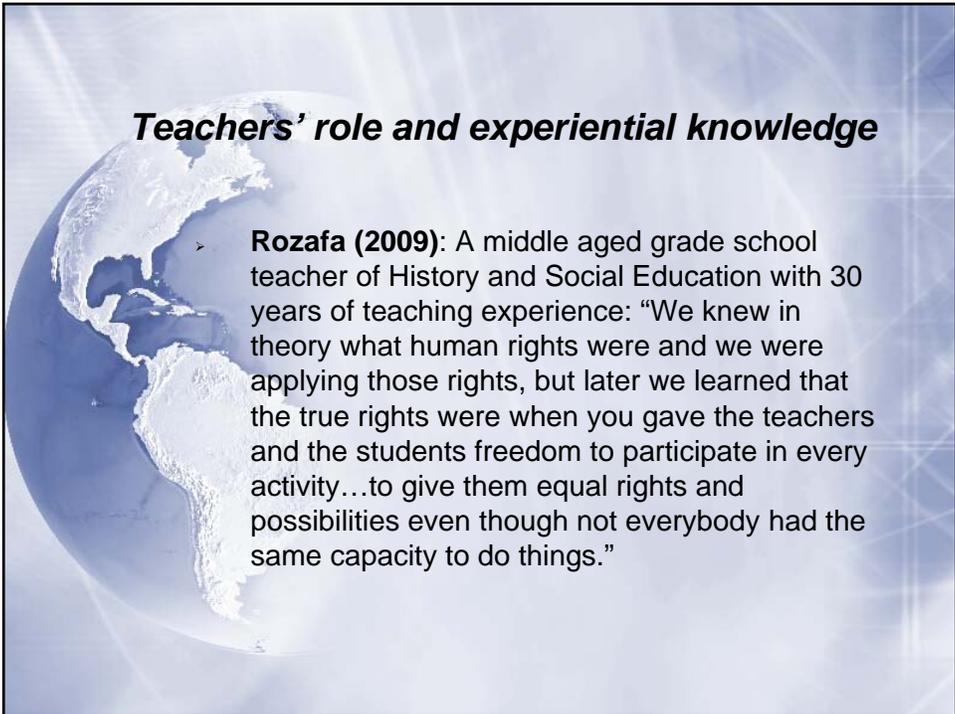
Teachers' role and identity

➤ **Albana (2009):** An elementary and middle school teacher of Albanian literature with 8 years of experience: “First of all I like to be the mother, then I like to be their teacher. I like to be their friend, and why not also to try to be their age? Because only like this will I understand them better, and only like this will I succeed in my work....I want to be just as the music conductor, and so my students are like the orchestra.”



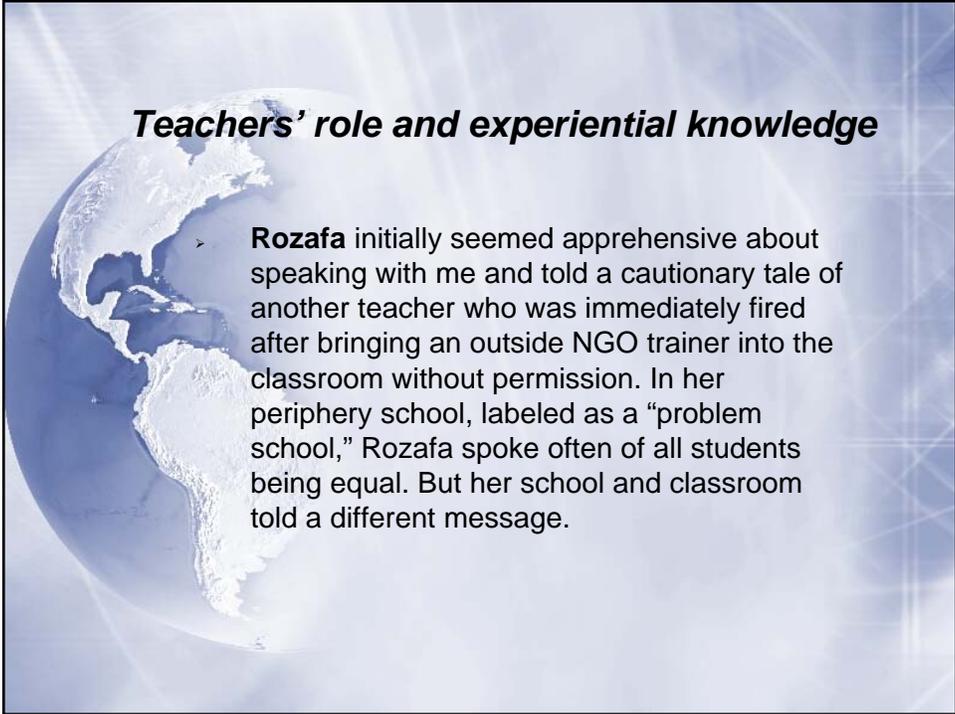
Teachers' role and identity

➤ **Albana** represented a new generation of teachers seeking to depart from the authoritarian methods of her former teachers. She maintained authority by staying close to students, encouraging their voice, and literally and symbolically left her door open for others to view her teaching. The primacy of relationships was a central theme in her narrative.



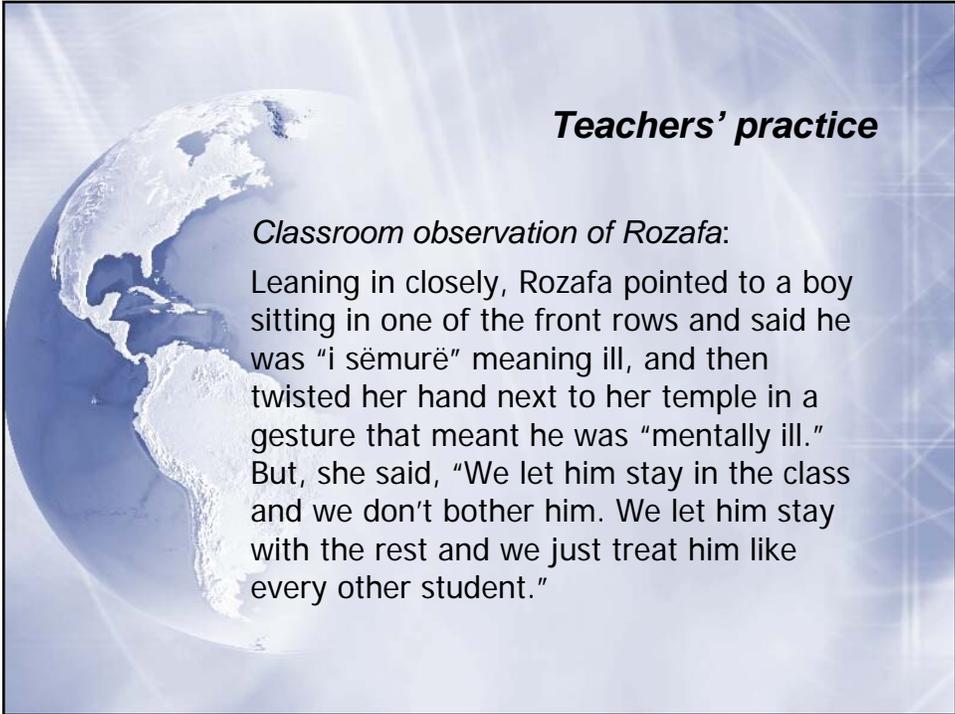
Teachers' role and experiential knowledge

➤ **Rozafa (2009)**: A middle aged grade school teacher of History and Social Education with 30 years of teaching experience: "We knew in theory what human rights were and we were applying those rights, but later we learned that the true rights were when you gave the teachers and the students freedom to participate in every activity...to give them equal rights and possibilities even though not everybody had the same capacity to do things."



Teachers' role and experiential knowledge

➤ **Rozafa** initially seemed apprehensive about speaking with me and told a cautionary tale of another teacher who was immediately fired after bringing an outside NGO trainer into the classroom without permission. In her periphery school, labeled as a “problem school,” Rozafa spoke often of all students being equal. But her school and classroom told a different message.



Teachers' practice

Classroom observation of Rozafa:

Leaning in closely, Rozafa pointed to a boy sitting in one of the front rows and said he was “i sëmurë” meaning ill, and then twisted her hand next to her temple in a gesture that meant he was “mentally ill.” But, she said, “We let him stay in the class and we don’t bother him. We let him stay with the rest and we just treat him like every other student.”

Teachers' practice

Classroom observation of Rozafa:

While discussing the high number of Roma (minority) students in the school, Rozafa said casually, "We have two Roma students in this class," she said. Then turning to her right, she pointed to two darker skinned girls seated at a nearby desk saying, "one" and "two," numbering them like that. She said they were very good students. At the end of class, Rozafa asked one of the Roma girls to say something about the school. The girl stood up at attention and stiffly said, "I have never experienced discrimination in this school."

Teachers' constrained choices and hybrid enactment

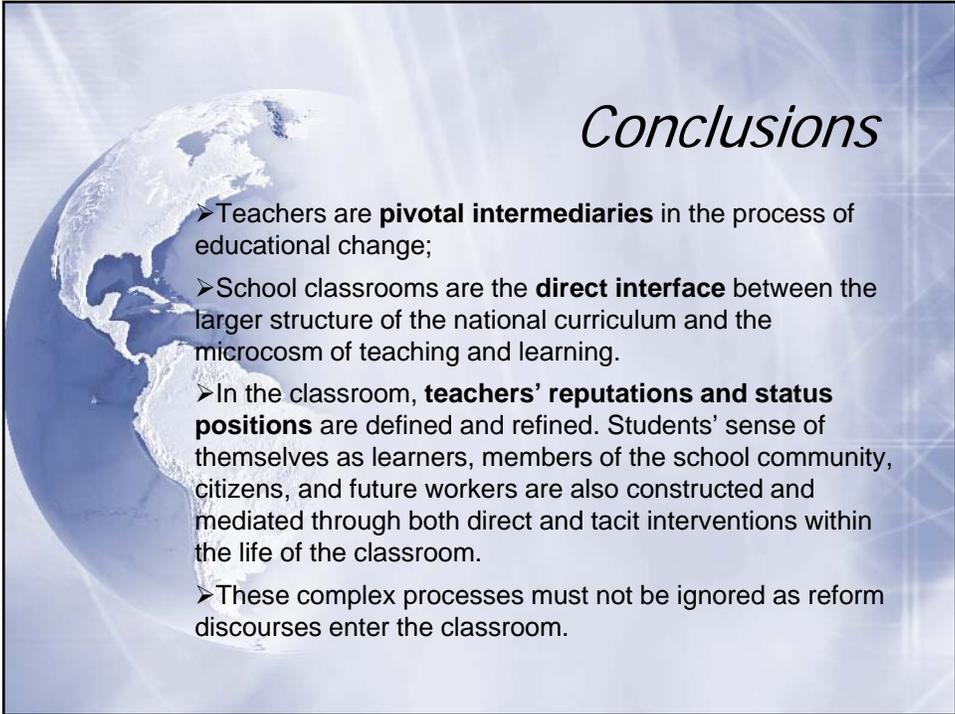
Teachers' work: Enacting and resisting change with unintended consequences

Teacher's action	Enacting change – Actions that are along the lines of the prescribed curricular reform	Resisting change – Actions that are at counter purposes with the prescribed curricular reform	Immediate Results – Intended (I) and Unintended (U)
Rozafa's adaptation of "humanitarian action" lesson on school de-segregation	She juxtaposed an imported American-NGO lesson with class discussion and posed questions intended to link US and Albanian school contexts	Her emphasis on students' "equality" allowed her to overlook or ignore cultural, social, economic, and ability differences among students thus reproducing classroom inequalities	I: Captured the majority of students' attention through reading the story; engaged student curiosity; attempted to ground a foreign lesson on human rights and equality in local realities U: Rendered diverse student identities and educational needs invisible through a discourse of "equality"



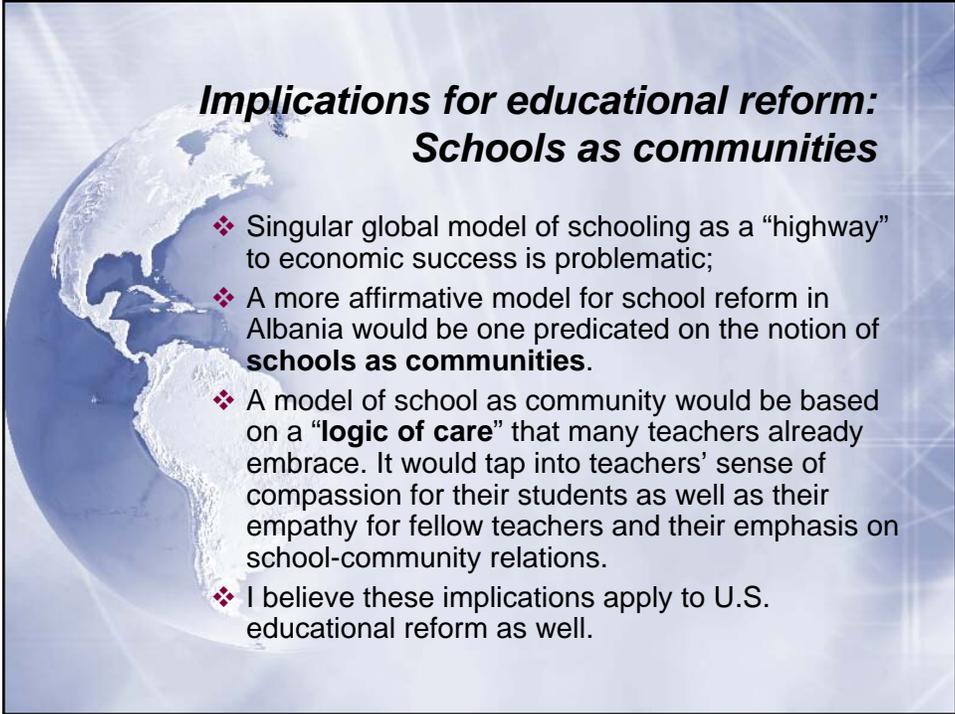
Complexity within the Teacher's World

- See Table 2 handout.



Conclusions

- Teachers are **pivotal intermediaries** in the process of educational change;
- School classrooms are the **direct interface** between the larger structure of the national curriculum and the microcosm of teaching and learning.
- In the classroom, **teachers' reputations and status positions** are defined and refined. Students' sense of themselves as learners, members of the school community, citizens, and future workers are also constructed and mediated through both direct and tacit interventions within the life of the classroom.
- These complex processes must not be ignored as reform discourses enter the classroom.



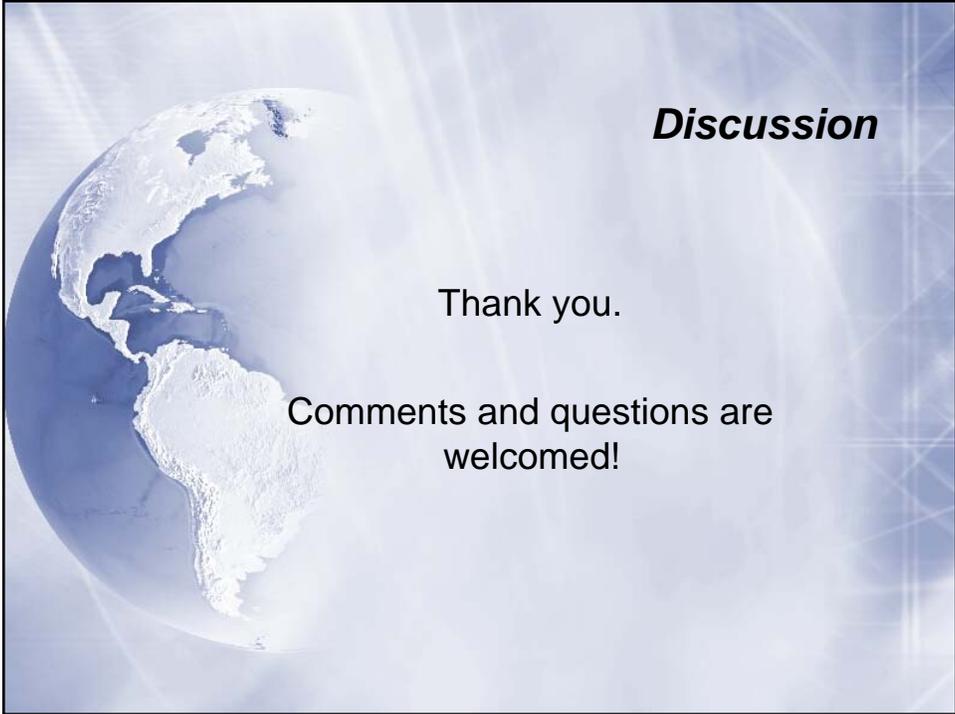
Implications for educational reform: Schools as communities

- ❖ Singular global model of schooling as a “highway” to economic success is problematic;
- ❖ A more affirmative model for school reform in Albania would be one predicated on the notion of **schools as communities**.
- ❖ A model of school as community would be based on a “**logic of care**” that many teachers already embrace. It would tap into teachers’ sense of compassion for their students as well as their empathy for fellow teachers and their emphasis on school-community relations.
- ❖ I believe these implications apply to U.S. educational reform as well.



Implications for international educational research

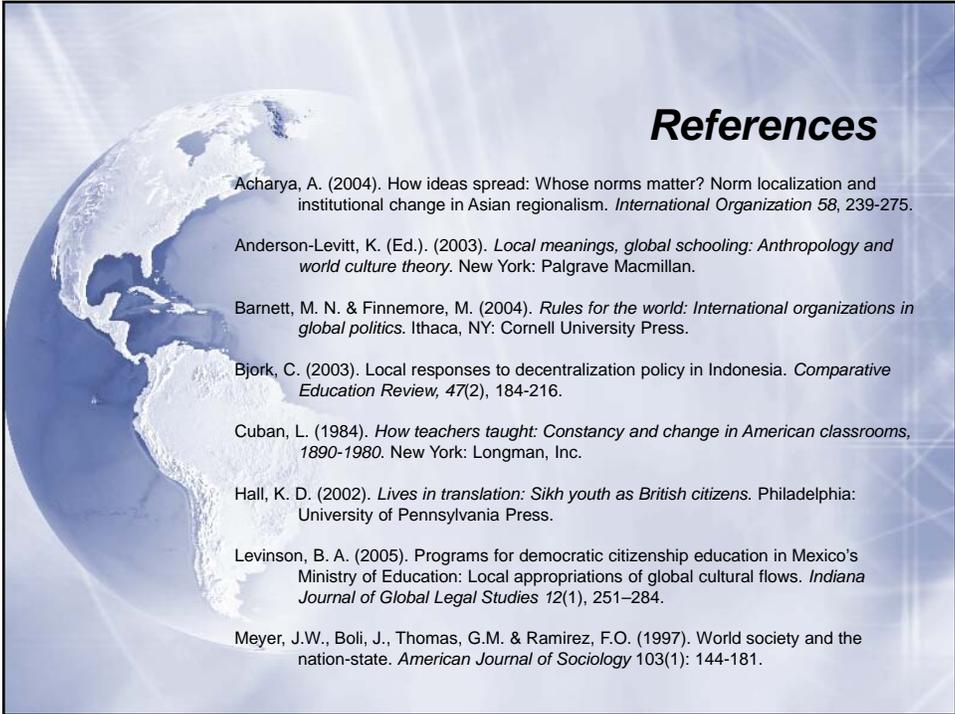
- ❖ Findings support the argument that global similarities at the policy level should not be equated with convergence at the level of school practice.
- ❖ It shows how educational reform and borrowing are in many ways political processes related to democratization. Not only are educational goals at stake, but education contributes to broader social and political goals as well.
- ❖ This research helps us develop a more consistent approach to investigating **localization** as a key concept in the field of CIE.



Discussion

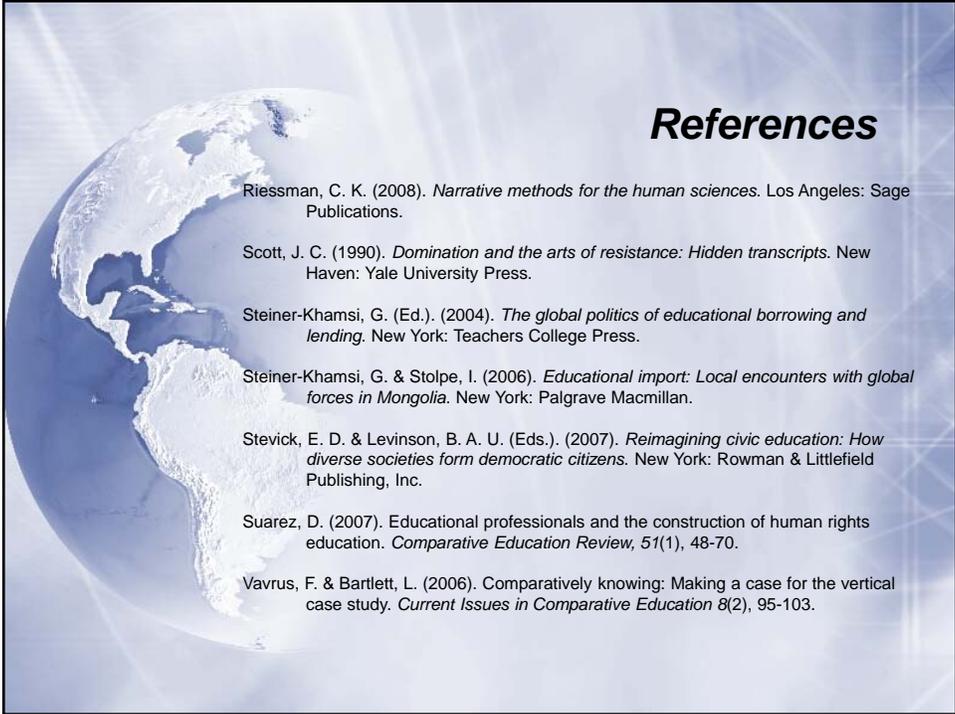
Thank you.

Comments and questions are
welcomed!



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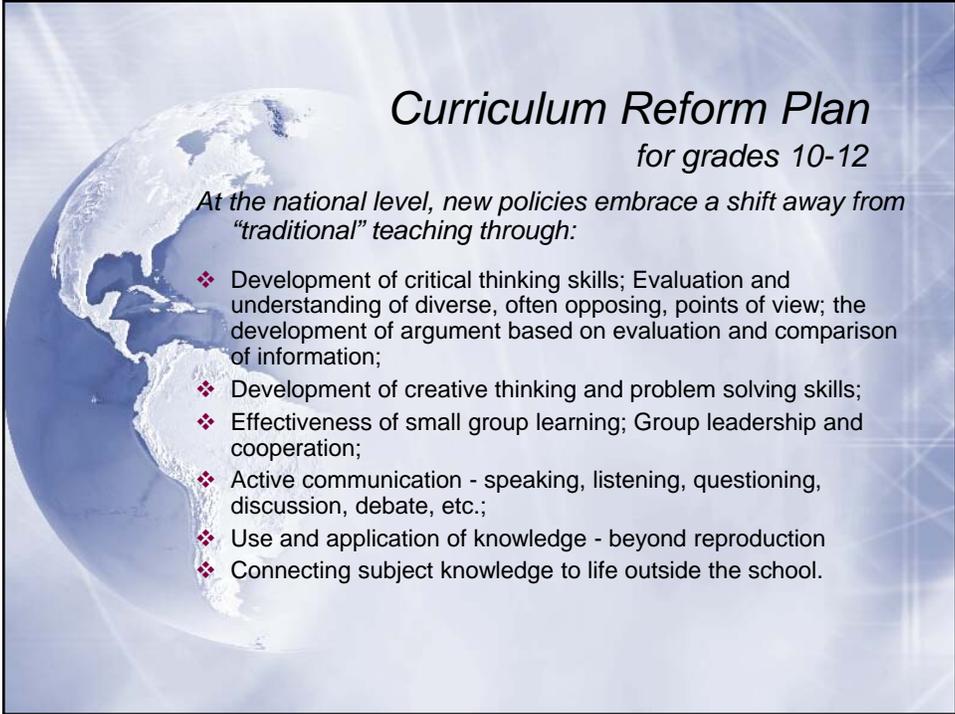
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Extra Slides

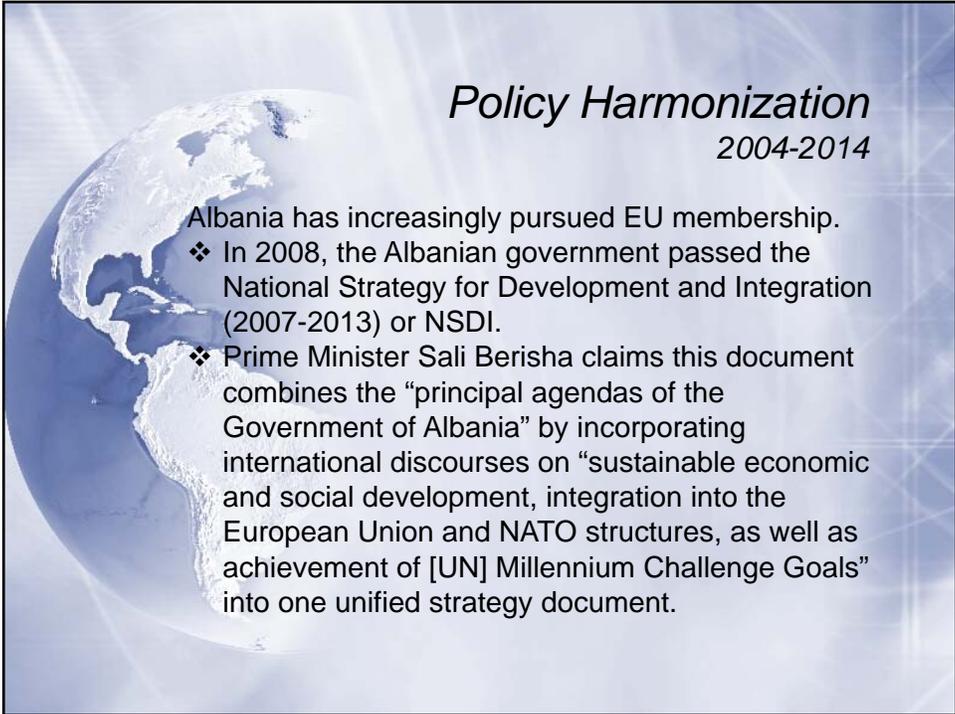


Curriculum Reform Plan

for grades 10-12

At the national level, new policies embrace a shift away from “traditional” teaching through:

- ❖ Development of critical thinking skills; Evaluation and understanding of diverse, often opposing, points of view; the development of argument based on evaluation and comparison of information;
- ❖ Development of creative thinking and problem solving skills;
- ❖ Effectiveness of small group learning; Group leadership and cooperation;
- ❖ Active communication - speaking, listening, questioning, discussion, debate, etc.;
- ❖ Use and application of knowledge - beyond reproduction
- ❖ Connecting subject knowledge to life outside the school.

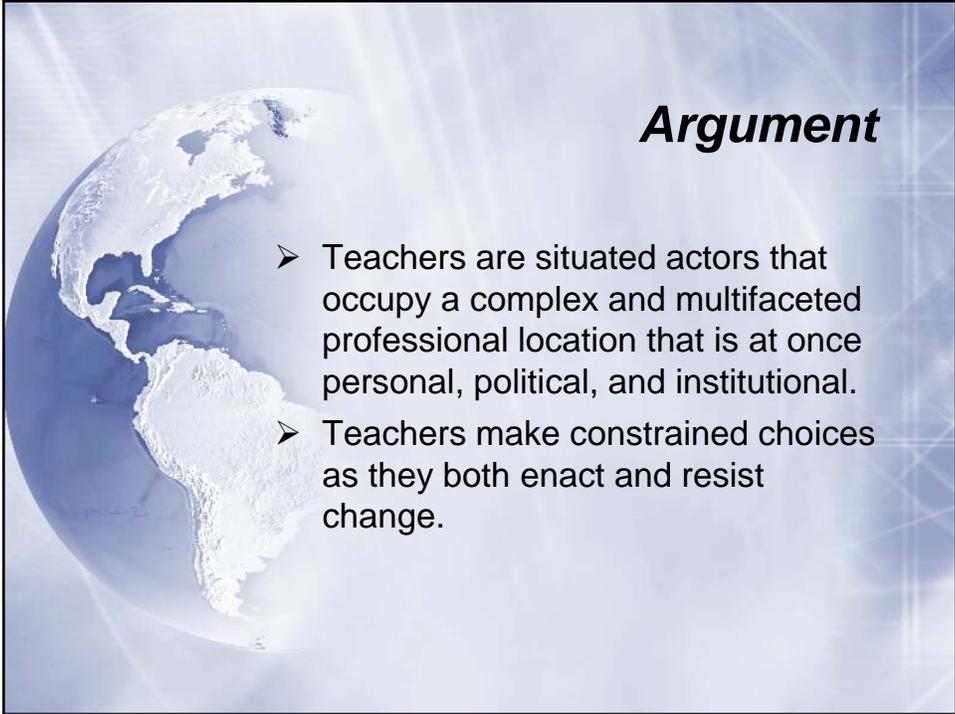


Policy Harmonization

2004-2014

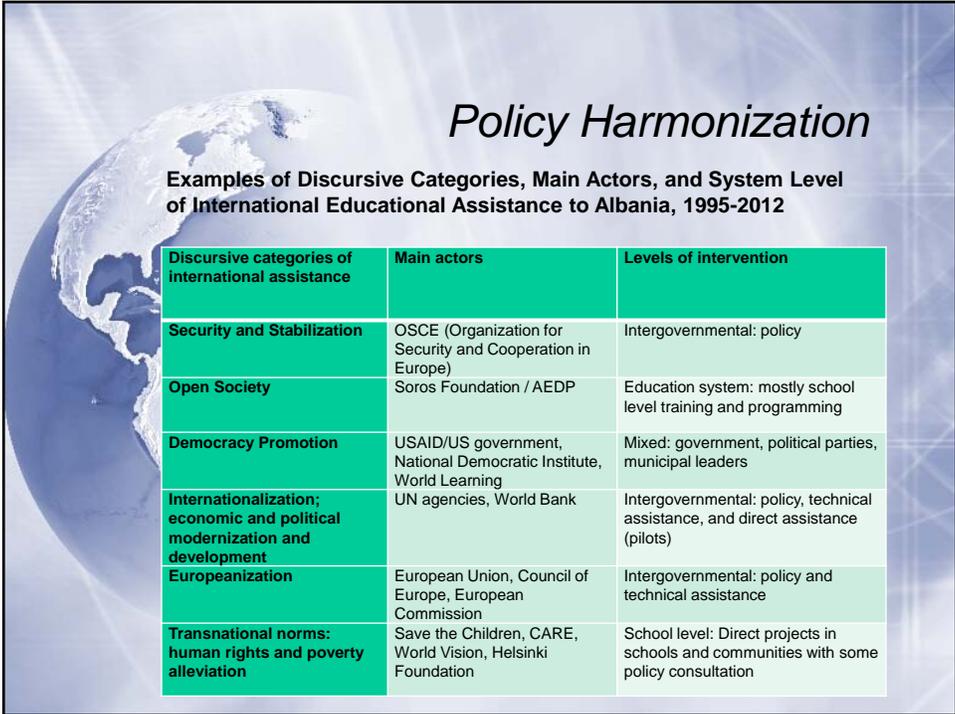
Albania has increasingly pursued EU membership.

- ❖ In 2008, the Albanian government passed the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2007-2013) or NSDI.
- ❖ Prime Minister Sali Berisha claims this document combines the “principal agendas of the Government of Albania” by incorporating international discourses on “sustainable economic and social development, integration into the European Union and NATO structures, as well as achievement of [UN] Millennium Challenge Goals” into one unified strategy document.



Argument

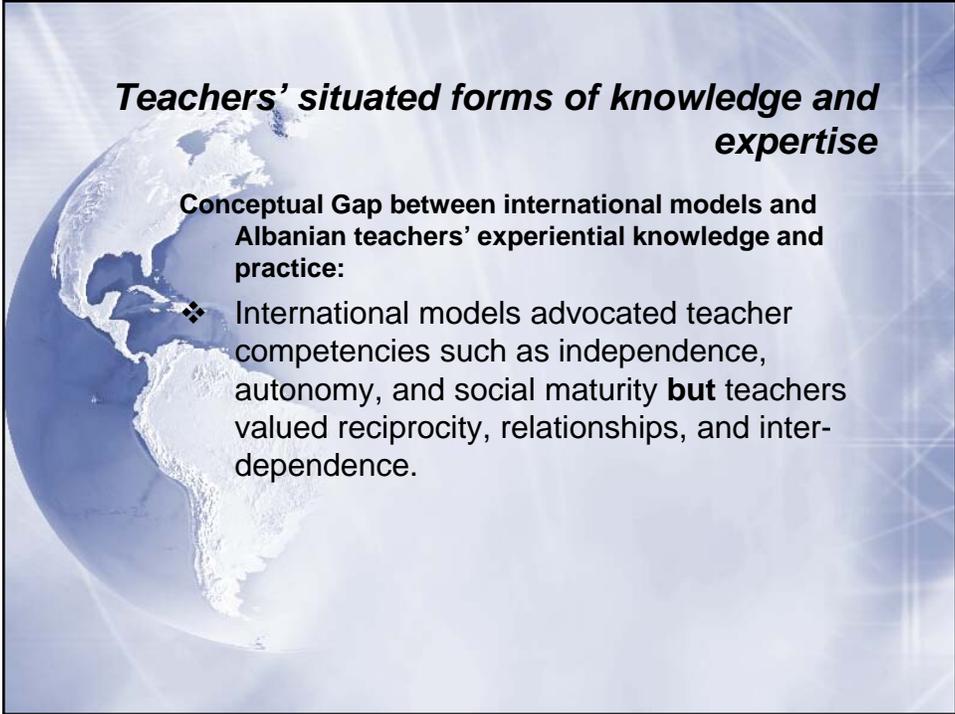
- Teachers are situated actors that occupy a complex and multifaceted professional location that is at once personal, political, and institutional.
- Teachers make constrained choices as they both enact and resist change.



Policy Harmonization

Examples of Discursive Categories, Main Actors, and System Level of International Educational Assistance to Albania, 1995-2012

Discursive categories of international assistance	Main actors	Levels of intervention
Security and Stabilization	OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe)	Intergovernmental: policy
Open Society	Soros Foundation / AEDP	Education system: mostly school level training and programming
Democracy Promotion	USAID/US government, National Democratic Institute, World Learning	Mixed: government, political parties, municipal leaders
Internationalization; economic and political modernization and development	UN agencies, World Bank	Intergovernmental: policy, technical assistance, and direct assistance (pilots)
Europeanization	European Union, Council of Europe, European Commission	Intergovernmental: policy and technical assistance
Transnational norms: human rights and poverty alleviation	Save the Children, CARE, World Vision, Helsinki Foundation	School level: Direct projects in schools and communities with some policy consultation



Teachers' situated forms of knowledge and expertise

Conceptual Gap between international models and Albanian teachers' experiential knowledge and practice:

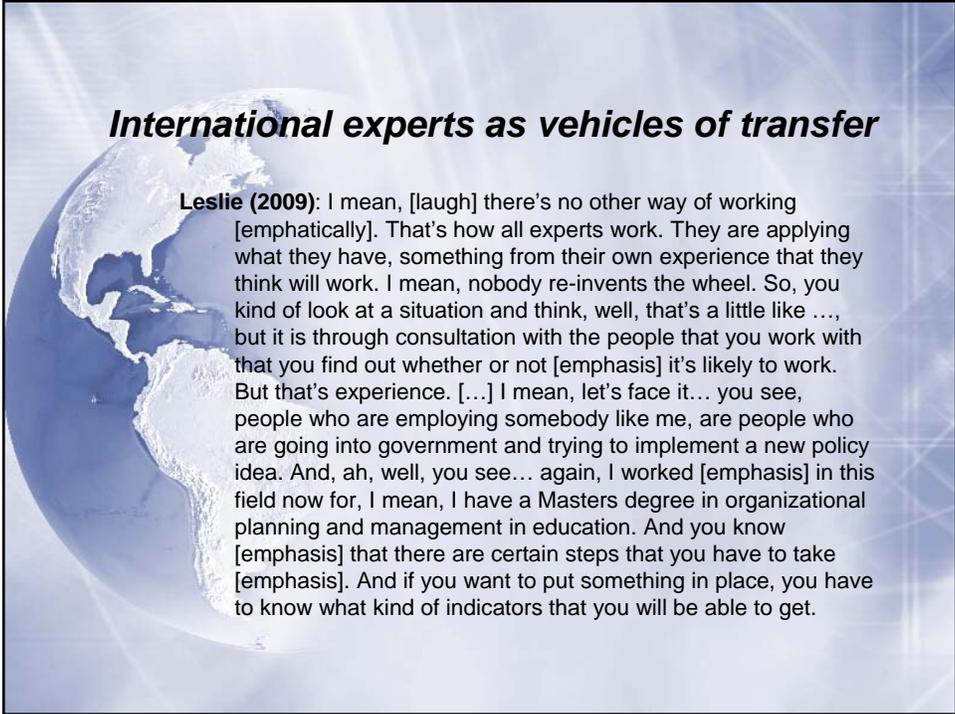
- ❖ International models advocated teacher competencies such as independence, autonomy, and social maturity **but** teachers valued reciprocity, relationships, and interdependence.



Policy Harmonization ***2004-2014***

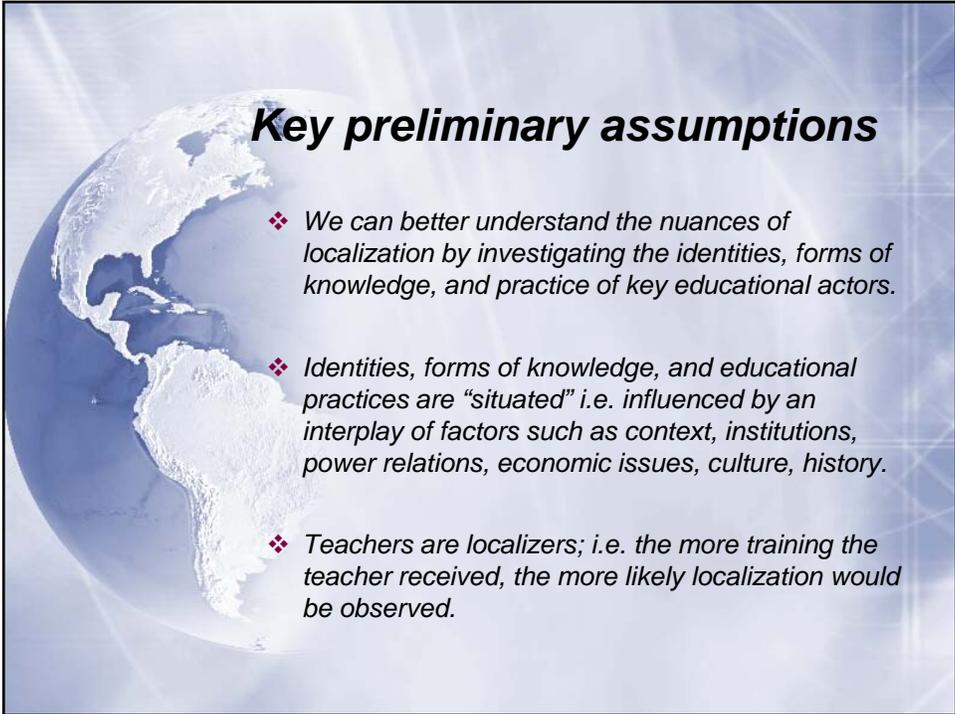
Along these lines, the NSDI outlines the following targets for educational reform and restructuring:

- ❖ "Curriculum modernization to meet labour market needs"
- ❖ "Promotion of European principles, preparing young people through education and youth exchange programmes on democratic citizenship, human rights and volunteering culture"
- ❖ Promotion of social inclusion to ensure "the integration, development and equality of children at schools"
- ❖ Ensuring "a modern national education system, which will stimulate sustainable economic growth, will raise competitiveness in the region and beyond, and will help consolidate citizen consciousness";
- ❖ Developing "standards for teachers and the status of their profession" and "student achievement standards and objectives based on performance";
- ❖ Ensuring that educational opportunities at all levels are provided without discrimination.



International experts as vehicles of transfer

Leslie (2009): I mean, [laugh] there's no other way of working [emphatically]. That's how all experts work. They are applying what they have, something from their own experience that they think will work. I mean, nobody re-invents the wheel. So, you kind of look at a situation and think, well, that's a little like ..., but it is through consultation with the people that you work with that you find out whether or not [emphasis] it's likely to work. But that's experience. [...] I mean, let's face it... you see, people who are employing somebody like me, are people who are going into government and trying to implement a new policy idea. And, ah, well, you see... again, I worked [emphasis] in this field now for, I mean, I have a Masters degree in organizational planning and management in education. And you know [emphasis] that there are certain steps that you have to take [emphasis]. And if you want to put something in place, you have to know what kind of indicators that you will be able to get.



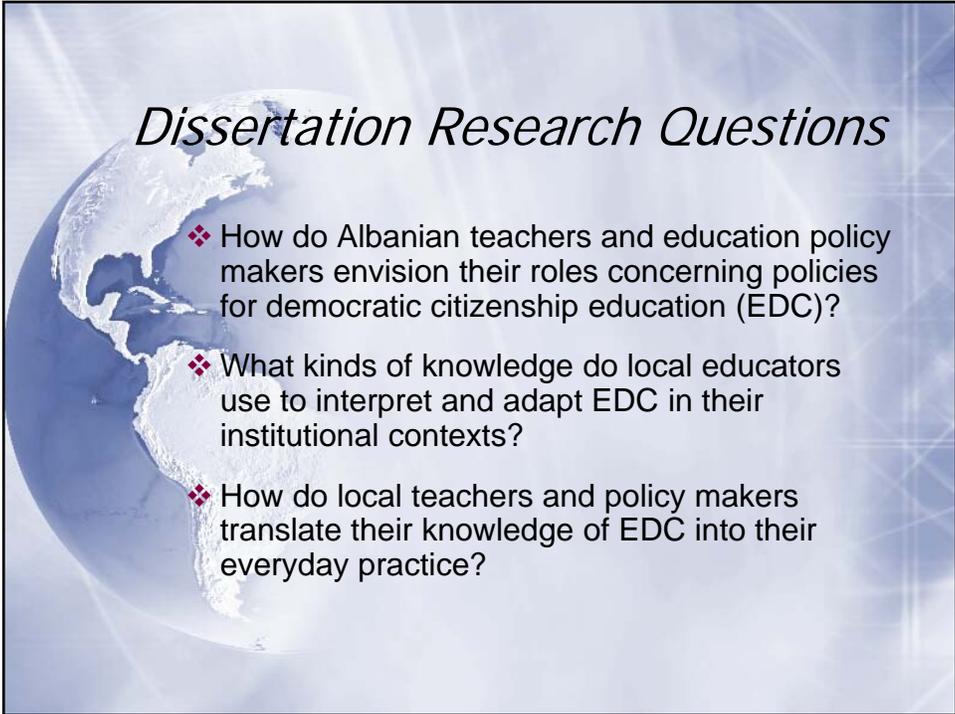
Key preliminary assumptions

- ❖ *We can better understand the nuances of localization by investigating the identities, forms of knowledge, and practice of key educational actors.*
- ❖ *Identities, forms of knowledge, and educational practices are "situated" i.e. influenced by an interplay of factors such as context, institutions, power relations, economic issues, culture, history.*
- ❖ *Teachers are localizers; i.e. the more training the teacher received, the more likely localization would be observed.*



Insight 1: International experts as vehicles of transfer

1. Internationals see themselves as authorities, agents of change, and experts qualified on the basis of their education, training, and international experiential knowledge
2. Internationals carry an array of beliefs and worldviews comprised of critical, analytical, and normative views that frame the local context and actors
3. The combination of their normative beliefs about what education should be and their analytic diagnosis of the local situation led the Internationals to critique not only local issues, but also – to various degrees – the international system in which they are embedded



Dissertation Research Questions

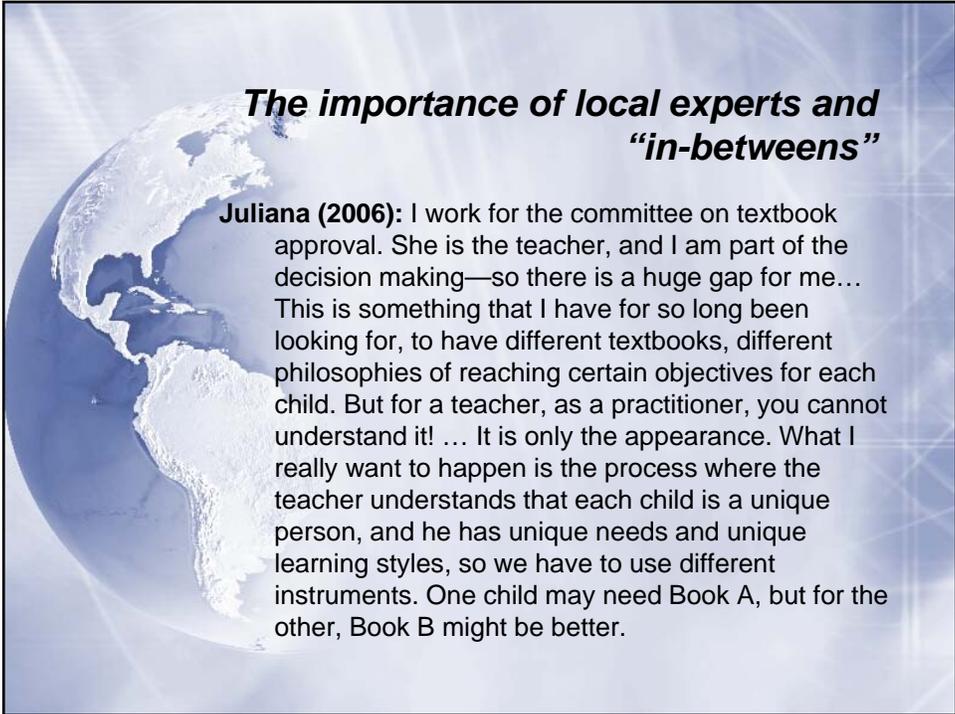
- ❖ How do Albanian teachers and education policy makers envision their roles concerning policies for democratic citizenship education (EDC)?
- ❖ What kinds of knowledge do local educators use to interpret and adapt EDC in their institutional contexts?
- ❖ How do local teachers and policy makers translate their knowledge of EDC into their everyday practice?



***Insight 2: The importance of local experts
and “in-betweeners”***

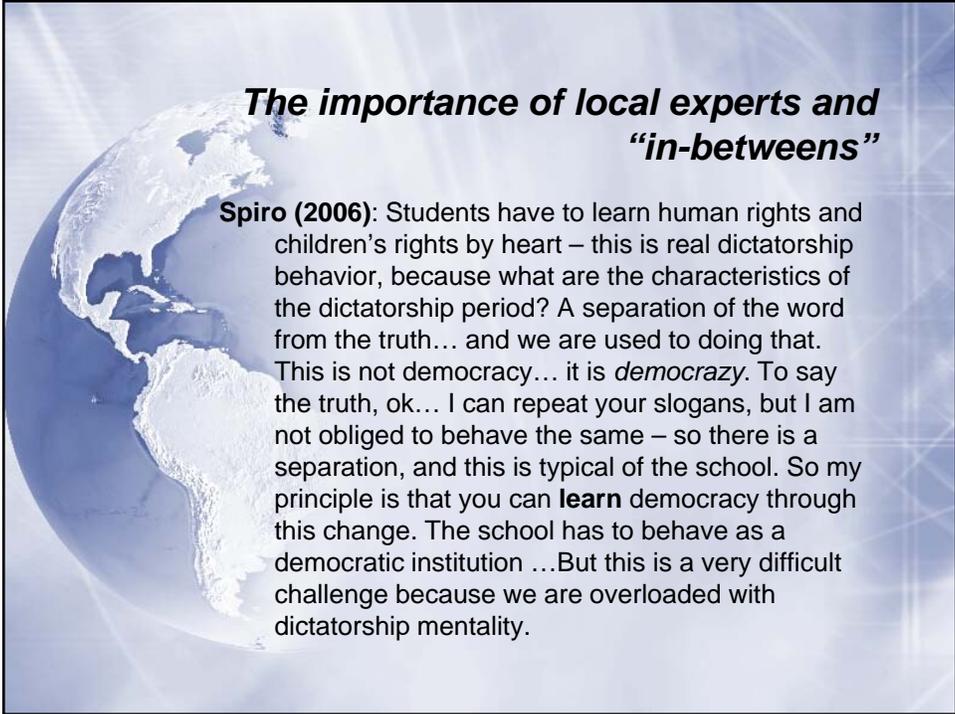
“In-betweeners” are:

- ❖ Cultural mediators and translators
- ❖ Rooted intellectuals and technical experts
- ❖ Dual advocates for government and practitioners
- ❖ Able to actively imagine local history and global future
- ❖ Willing and able to negotiate with both internationals and locals
- ❖ Perceived as trustworthy and (somewhat) independent of local political factions



***The importance of local experts and
“in-betweeners”***

Juliana (2006): I work for the committee on textbook approval. She is the teacher, and I am part of the decision making—so there is a huge gap for me... This is something that I have for so long been looking for, to have different textbooks, different philosophies of reaching certain objectives for each child. But for a teacher, as a practitioner, you cannot understand it! ... It is only the appearance. What I really want to happen is the process where the teacher understands that each child is a unique person, and he has unique needs and unique learning styles, so we have to use different instruments. One child may need Book A, but for the other, Book B might be better.



The importance of local experts and “in-betweens”

Spiro (2006): Students have to learn human rights and children's rights by heart – this is real dictatorship behavior, because what are the characteristics of the dictatorship period? A separation of the word from the truth... and we are used to doing that. This is not democracy... it is *democracy*. To say the truth, ok... I can repeat your slogans, but I am not obliged to behave the same – so there is a separation, and this is typical of the school. So my principle is that you can **learn** democracy through this change. The school has to behave as a democratic institution ...But this is a very difficult challenge because we are overloaded with dictatorship mentality.



Urban Albania





Foreign Educational Projects: 1995-2010

- ❖ Soros Foundation - Step by Step; Kualida; Soros Scholars
- ❖ Council of Europe - Democratic Citizenship Education
- ❖ UNESCO - Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education
- ❖ UNICEF - Global Education; Peace Education; Hidden Dropout study; Education for All; Gender Task Force on Education
- ❖ UNDP - E-schools program
- ❖ UNDDA - Peace and Disarmament Education
- ❖ World Bank - EFA fast track; Educational Excellence and Equity
- ❖ International Organization for Migration - Anti-trafficking education
- ❖ Save the Children, Int. - Early Childhood Education
- ❖ Albanian Center for Human Rights - Human Rights Education
- ❖ Albanian Center for Peace and Disarmament Education
- ❖ Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation
- ❖ Center for Democratic Education (funding from external donors)
- ❖ KulturKontakt - vocational education



Policy Significance

- ❖ Enhance our **understanding** -theoretically and practically- of local challenges and strategies for educational reform in the context of a post-authoritarian democratizing society;
- ❖ Improve **effectiveness** of democracy-promotion through education (foreign educational aid);
- ❖ Help education policy-makers craft policies that are more **salient** with local actors and contribute to long-term, **sustainable change**.



Research Timeline

- ❖ 2003-2004: Preliminary dissertation research in Albania (sponsored by Fulbright)
- ❖ 2004-2005: Informal research while working as instructor at private university in Albania;
- ❖ June-July 2006 and 2007: Preliminary dissertation research on education policy changes in Albania (sponsored by Cornell University)
- ❖ December 2008-July 2009: Dissertation research in Albania (sponsored by BOREN and IREX grants)



Theoretical Approach

- ✧ **Identities** (sense of one's role; power within institutional structure; relationship with other key actors): e.g. power brokers, gatekeepers, innovators/entrepreneurs, mediators/intermediaries, old guard protectors
- ✧ **Kinds of Knowledge** e. g. experiential/*metis*, professional/technical, cultural/knowing "how things are done", formal (level of education)
- ✧ **Forms of Practice** (practice as agency; policy/practice as socio-cultural resource) creating policy; training; curriculum development; teaching/pedagogy/instruction; negotiation; adaptation

Teachers' constrained choices and hybrid enactment

Teachers' work: Enacting and resisting change with unintended consequences

Teacher's action	Enacting change – Actions that are along the lines of the prescribed curricular reform	Resisting change – Actions that are at counter purposes with the prescribed curricular reform	Immediate Results – Intended (I) and Unintended (U)
Rozafa's adaptation of "humanitarian action" lesson on school de-segregation	She juxtaposed an imported American-NGO lesson with class discussion with posed questions intended to link US and Albanian school contexts	Her emphasis on students' "equality" allowed her to overlook or ignore cultural, social, economic, and ability differences among students thus reproducing classroom inequalities	<p>I: Captured the majority of students' attention through reading the story; engaged student curiosity; attempted to ground a foreign lesson on human rights and equality in local realities</p> <p>U: Rendered diverse student identities and educational needs invisible through a discourse of "equality"</p>

Methodology

- ❖ **Semi-structured interviews:** 40 interviews with 30 participants: local and international policy-makers, program directors, school directors and teachers (a "non-representative" snowball sample);
- ❖ **Participant observation:** 40 hours classroom and school observation in 6 different schools in Tirana, Lezhe, and Korca; Several hours observing educational trainings and meetings;
- ❖ **Policy content analysis:** National Strategy for Social and Economic Development; National Education Strategy; Educational Excellence and Equity Project; Curriculum Reform Plan;
- ❖ *Translation; Transcription; Qualitative Analysis*